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# WHAT TO BELIEVE

BEING

A SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

ENGLISH SPEAKING NATIVES OF INDIA,

**DISCARDED**

IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

71 6 DEC 1967

BY THE

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# CONTENTS.

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	<i>Page</i>
<i>Prefatory Note</i> , .....	1
LETTER I.	
INTRODUCTORY, .....	3
LETTER II.	
HINDUISM, .....	13
LETTER III.	
ISLAM, .....	25
LETTER IV.	
RELIGIOUS NESCIENCE, .....	33
LETTER V.	
THEISM, .....	47
LETTER VI.	
INTUITION, .....	63
LETTER VII.	
REVELATION, .....	75
LETTER VIII.	
REVELATION, ( <i>Continued</i> ) .....	83
LETTER IX.	
THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION, .....	93
LETTER X.	
THE PROPHEPIC PREPARATION, .....	107
LETTER XI.	
JESUS OF NAZARETH, .....	125
LETTER XII.	
THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS, .....	137
LETTER XIII.	
THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS, .....	147
LETTER XIV.	
THE RISEN SAVIOUR, .....	161
LETTER XV.	
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, .....	175
LETTER XVI.	
THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM, .....	187
LETTER XVII.	
CHRIST AND OTHER MASTERS, .....	203
LETTER XVIII.	
A POSTSCRIPT, .....	215



## ~~PREFATORY~~ NOTE

TO THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATIVES OF INDIA.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I venture to address to you a Series of Letters upon important religious subjects, as I have reason to think that a great many of you are in a state of much uncertainty regarding what to believe. There are so many systems of religious thought at present claiming your attention, that I can understand and sympathize with your difficulty. The letters which I propose to issue to you, are the production of one who believes the gospel of Christ, and I do not disguise from you the fact, that it would be a source of great happiness to me if I could lead you to the same belief. I write to you as a friend to friends upon subjects which you as well as I must admit to be of importance; and what I ask you is, that you will read these letters patiently, seriously, and with a desire to receive and welcome the truth, whatever it may be. And that you may be wisely guided in

making up your minds as to what to believe, is the earnest desire of,

Your sincere Friend,  
ROBERT JARDINE.

19, *Cornwallis Square*,  
*Calcutta, August 10th, 1876.*

P. S.—The pages of the Letters will be consecutively numbered, so that if you desire to preserve them, you may bind them all up, when the issue is completed, into a single volume.

# WHAT TO BELIEVE.

## LETTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

---

§ 1. To the educated young men of India I desire to address a few letters regarding important subjects which are at the present time demanding a large share of their attention. My letters will refer chiefly to the great burning religious questions which are now perpetually being asked, and to which you, my friends, should endeavour to give a conscientious and, if possible, a truthful reply. I address myself to you as a friend, and I trust that you will read my letters as the letters of a friend. By friendship I mean a desire to promote the best welfare of its object; and the subject of my letters will concern your best welfare. I take it also for granted that you are actuated by a desire to secure your own best welfare, but that you are not very clear about how it may be secured. In making this latter assumption, I do not disparage either your knowledge or your abilities; because people may be possessed of great knowledge and great abilities, and yet be ignorant of their truest and highest inter-



ests and the way to secure them. My letters will be about serious subjects; therefore do not seek in them for amusement. They will not be written in a spirit of controversy; therefore I beg of you not to read them in a controversial spirit. They will be written under a strong conviction of the importance of truth and goodness and immortal life; therefore I beseech you to read them with sympathy, as believing that the attainment of these important things is the highest object of that existence which we have received.

§ 2. In India at the present day there are various systems of thought and belief concerned to a greater or less extent with religious subjects which press themselves upon the attention of young men of reflection. We have in the first place the old religions of the country, Hinduism and Mahometanism, concerning which we need not now speak more fully, as you will understand what is meant by the mere mention of the names. But I need scarcely tell you that many of yourselves, by the means of English education, English literature, philosophy, and science have no real belief in these ancient forms of faith. A strong reaction against them has arisen, which in many cases has gone so far as the complete destruction of the basis of all religion. The very existence of God and a spiritual world are often considered matters of doubt; and many believe that only the objects and relations

of the physical and the mental worlds which are directly known to us are worthy of serious thought. This extreme reaction, which we may call the system of Religious Nescience, should be carefully studied. There are many, however, whose spiritual sympathies will not permit them to advance so far as this complete negation of religion. They believe firmly in God's existence and His unity, and consider that communion with Him is the highest life of man. They call themselves Theists and hold that their form of religious faith is the purest and best in the world. The claims of Theism upon your minds deserve careful attention. Finally the missionaries of Christianity from Europe press upon your attention the claims of the Christian faith which they believe to embody the truth and the power which only is able to regenerate the world and confer spiritual and immortal life upon man. These different systems of faith or doubt press themselves upon your attention, and the present letters are designed to be of some assistance to you in your search after truth.

§ 3. Before referring in detail to the different systems which are competing with one another for acceptance amongst the millions of India I wish to say a few words to you about the spirit in which it would be well for you to give attention to the subjects which I intend to bring before you. I think you will all be

willing to admit that a knowledge of truth is of great importance. And here I wish to make a distinction between *truth* and *opinion*. Sometimes we think or are strongly convinced that something is true, when it is really not so. This is our opinion. But when our opinion agrees with the events or facts of the universe around us, we have a knowledge of the truth. Opinions may be very erroneous and very various; truth is invariable and eternal. Our opinions, however, whether they accord with the truth or not, exercise a powerful influence over our lives—in fact our lives are what they are chiefly in consequence of the opinions which we have entertained. If, therefore, our opinions are not in accordance with the truth, the consequence of this inaccuracy may be disastrous to us. If in affairs of ordinary life, we happen to be of the opinion that we might eat poison or violate the laws of health with impunity, the practical result of such an opinion would probably be a speedy death. If in religious matters we should hold the opinion that there is no God, or that He does not govern the world upon moral principles, or that there is no eternal death to be avoided or eternal life to be sought after; we might some time learn that our opinion was false, and that the result of neglecting to seek after the truth regarding these things would be very tragical. If there is such a thing as truth, independent of our

private opinions about the truth, it is surely of great importance to us that we should know it, especially that truth which regards such all-important subjects as life and death, sin and holiness, and the connection between the present material world in which we live, and the eternal spiritual world in which it is believed God dwells and in which those who possess spiritual life also will dwell. These things are matters of practical concern to all of us, and it is of vast importance that our opinions regarding them should be made conformable to the truth. I therefore request you to read these letters with an earnest desire to discover what is true, and with a conviction of the importance of truth when discovered. It is not a matter of indifference to any of us whether the universe was developed of itself or whether it was brought into existence by an all-powerful and all-wise Being ; whether we possess a nature and a life which will perish with our bodies, or whether they will continue to exist after our gross material bodies have been dissolved ; whether we of ourselves can attain unto eternal life and happiness in communion with God, or whether we require the influence of a Power and a Person coming directly from God in order to raise us up out of the sin and the carnal selfishness in which we are now naturally entangled. These are not questions regarding which it is of little importance what

opinions we hold, and I trust that you will at once lay aside the idea which is so prevalent, that each nation's religious opinions or beliefs are good and true *for them*, although *not for other people*. This opinion has done a great deal of harm, as it has prevented many from seriously enquiring concerning the truth. Personal opinion and national opinion have been thought sufficiently trustworthy guides, and hence truth has not been earnestly sought after.

§ 4. I have another general remark which I wish to make before fairly entering into my subject. I have already said, that I do not wish to discuss the subjects of these letters in a *controversial spirit*. By this I do not mean that I will decline to oppose or controvert anything which I think to be erroneous in any of the conflicting systems. I think it is a simple duty for every person to oppose what he believes to be false and bad and support what he believes to be true and good, and I shall not hesitate to do both in the course of these discussions. But by a *controversial spirit* I mean a spirit of opposition and prejudice against everything belonging to any particular system, simply because it is a system which, in the main, conflicts with the one which I approve of. I believe that a sincere lover of truth should sympathize with and acknowledge truth wherever it is to be found. A *controversial spirit* is a mischievous


spirit, because it prevents people from recognising truth and goodness in any system to which they happen to be opposed. And it will be my earnest desire in these letters to give a cordial recognition to any truth which may be found anywhere. The time has gone past when searchers after truth can afford to neglect or despise the elements of truth found in other systems of thought than their own ; and the indiscriminate condemnation of an opposing system is most unwise and harmful. As it is my earnest desire to avoid this controversial spirit, I beg that you, my readers, will try to do so also. I say *try*, because I know that it is a difficult thing to get rid of it altogether. A Hindu naturally seeks to support his national faith, and it is not an easy matter for him to give up his predilections in favour of the time-honoured beliefs and practices of his ancestors. A Mussulman naturally venerates his Koran and the authority of Mahomet, and it is a difficult thing for him to look with an unprejudiced eye upon the doctrines and customs which are offered to him in place of his own. A Christian naturally places confidence in the beliefs which have been handed down to him hallowed by the most sacred associations, and it has proved a difficult thing for him to examine, without prejudice, the doctrines and customs of Hindus, Mussulmans, and adherents of other religious creeds. Therefore I

say *try* to read these letters without prejudice and without a spirit of controversy, as I shall try thus to write them. And I hope that neither my labour in writing nor yours in reading will be without good results.

§ 5. Something is now to be said, in this introductory letter regarding the order in which the different subjects of discussion will be taken up. I have already said, that the chief systems which are competitors for the acceptance of the people of India are : the established religions, Hinduism and Islam ; the extreme reactionary system, Religious Nescience ; Theism in various forms and degrees of purity ; and finally Christianity. And I think that the order in which I have mentioned these systems of thought and faith or doubt, will be the most convenient order in which they may be discussed. I shall therefore take them up in this order. I do not intend these letters to contain full or exhaustive accounts of these various systems, as I must presume that you are yourselves acquainted very thoroughly with some of them, and to a greater or less degree with all. My object is not to give information concerning what you know, but to present some thoughts or principles which I trust may be of help in guiding you to the acceptance of truth. Especially in the consideration of the established religions of the country it will be unnecessary to write for the purpose of conveying instruction ;

enough will be done if I show you the importance of carefully examining the other forms of religious belief which are offered to you.

§ 6. And now let me say a word in conclusion about the great importance and responsibility of using our powers in searching after the things which concern our highest welfare. We are endowed with noble powers of reason and conscience, and it seems inconceivable that these should be given to us merely for the purposes of our short earthly lives. We are conscious of powers and of longings which lead us far away from and above the present physical world; these are surely not given us for nothing. And we are guilty of killing out our higher nature—of spiritual suicide—if we do not supply it with suitable food. The world and all its wealth and power and beauty cannot satisfy the wants of the soul; *that* requires for its satisfaction and nourishment something quite different in character, something which does not and cannot spring out of the physical universe. Let me ask you then seriously to enquire after this higher life, and the food thereof and, if you discover it, seek to obtain it even at the risk of losing other valuable earthly things.







## LETTER II.

### HINDUISM.

---

§ 6. As the majority of you to whom I am addressing myself in these letters are by birth Hindus, I have to presume that you are much better acquainted with the subject of the present letter than I can possibly be. But as I do not write for the purpose of conveying information to you about the principles or details of your national religion, you will not accuse me of presumption in writing about it. By Hinduism, I suppose you mean the very comprehensive and very various system of religious belief and worship which has prevailed in India for more than two thousand years. Introduced in its original and simplest form by the Aryan immigrants who captured the country from the aboriginal inhabitants, it was at first a worship of the powers and forces of nature, spiritualized no doubt by the beautiful conceptions of man's poetic fancy, but yet in its essence a true worship of nature. This original simple worship of natural powers became developed and changed in the course of centuries partly by internal natural growth—the result of many minds applying them-

selves to thinking about the spiritual world and human relations to it—and partly by the absorption of numerous ideas and forms of worship found amongst the aboriginal tribes. Many beautiful hymns for use in worship were composed; many rites and ceremonies sprung up; many poetical fancies regarding the nature and operations of the gods were conceived. In time reflective thought began to be exercised upon religious and philosophical subjects and, as the result, there sprang up the great philosophical schools. Then there took place a great development of rite and ceremony; gods were multiplied, myths were formed, rites were instituted, sensuality and avarice and ambition were powerful in determining doctrines and worship, and thus the multiform body of Puranic Hinduism arose. I presume that there are now few of the educated young men of India who place much confidence in the rites and teachings of the modern Puranic sects, and that those who defend Hinduism take, as the true type of their national faith, its condition as it existed before the modern sects arose. This being the case, I shall turn to its original condition, and shall quote an account of it from the pen of one in whom you as well as I can place confidence for his honesty, scholarship, and genuine regard for the welfare of India. I mean Professor Monier Williams. That eminent Sanskrit scholar says:—

" A common philosophical creed . . . must have prevailed in India long before the crystallization of rationalistic inquiry into separate systems. This, which is the faith of all Indian philosophers and a great number of thinking Brahmins of the present day, may be summed up as follows :—

" 1st. In the first place, then, rationalistic Brahmanism, as I propose to call this common faith, holds the eternity of soul, both retrospectively and prospectively. It looks upon soul as of two kinds : *a.* the supreme soul—*paramâtman* ; *b.* the personal individual soul of living beings—*jivâtman* ; and it maintains that if any entity is eternal, it cannot have had a beginning, or else it must have an end.

" 2nd. In the second place, this creed asserts the eternity of the matter or substance constituting the visible universe, or of that substance out of which the universe has been evolved ; in other words, of its substantial or material cause.

" 3rd. In the third place, the soul, though itself sheer thought and knowledge, can only exercise thought, consciousness, sensation, and cognition, and indeed can only act and will, when connected with external and material objects of sensation, invested with some bodily form and joined to mind (*manas*), which last is an internal organ of sense—a sort of inlet of thought to the soul, belonging only to the body, only existing with it, and quite as distinct from the soul as any of the external organs of the body.

" 4th. This union of the soul with the body is productive of bondage, and, in the case of human souls, of misery ; for when once so united, the soul begins to apprehend objects through the senses, receiving therefrom painful and pleasurable impres-

sions. It also becomes conscious of personal existence and individuality; then it commences acting; but all action, whether good or bad, leads to bondage, because every act inevitably entails a consequence. Hence, if an act be good, it must be rewarded; and if bad, it must be punished.

“5th. In order to accomplish the entire working out of these consequences or ‘ripenings of acts,’ as they are called, it is not enough that the personal soul goes to heaven or to hell. The necessity for removal to a place of reward or punishment is indeed admitted; but this is not effectual or final. In order that the consequences of acts may be entirely worked out, the soul must leave heaven or hell and return to corporeal existence. Thus it has to pass through innumerable bodies, migrating into higher, intermediate or lower forms, from a god to a demon, man, animal, or plant, or even a stone, according to its various stages of merit or demerit.

“6th. This transmigration of the soul through a constant succession of bodies, which is as much a fixed and peremptory doctrine of Buddhism as of Hinduism, is to be regarded as the root of all evil. Moreover, by it all the misery, inequality of fortune, and diversity of character in the world is to be explained. . . . Thus the soul has to bear the consequences of its own acts only.

“7th. From a consideration of these essential articles of Hindu Rationalism, it is plain that the great aim of philosophy is to teach a man to abstain from every kind of action; from liking or disliking, from loving or hating, and even from being indifferent to anything. The living personal soul must shake off the fetters of action, and getting rid of body,

mind, and all sense of separate personality, return to the condition of simple soul.

"This constitutes *Pramā* or *Jñāna*, the true measure of all existing difficulties—the right apprehension of truth—which, if once acquired by the soul, confers upon it final emancipation, whether called *Mukti*, *Moksha*, *Apanarga* or *Nirvāna*."\*

§ 7. According to this account of the rational elements which are involved in all Hindu forms of worship and belief, we appear to have as essential constituents of Hinduism in its best form the following :—the eternity and indestructibility of spirit and matter ; the bondage of the spirit by matter resulting in all the wretchedness and sin of the world ; change and transmigration, the necessary condition and the necessary evil of the spirit as long as bondage lasts ; and finally *Moksha*, or absorption into the universal spirit, in which separate individual existence is lost. With reference to these rational doctrines, we observe generally that they are essentially the product of human speculation. Wise, thoughtful men turned their attention to the facts of human life, and in order to account for these facts, formed the above hypothetical doctrines regarding the unseen world. The soul must be eternal, because they could not conceive a beginning from nothing. So of matter. The evils of life, and especially the unequal distribution of the

\* Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, pp. 61-70.

blessings and the pains of life could be accounted for as the result of deeds performed in some previous form of existence ; and the unpunished sins of human life were in the same way to be punished in some future birth. Action and change, especially in a hot climate, are disagreeable ; rest and inaction are pleasant ; therefore the ideal and the aim of life were naturally thought to be perfect freedom from action and change, which of course involves the loss of personal existence.

An examination of these doctrines, even the superficial examination to which we have subjected them, shews that they cannot pretend to be a *revelation* in the proper sense of the term ; that is, they are manifestly the result of human thought, applied to the facts of human life and the surrounding universe. There is nothing in them which could not naturally arise by the continued reflection of thoughtful men. It is true that the Indian sages frequently clothed their speculations in the form of a revelation from higher beings, but this appears plainly intended to give them greater authority with those for whose instruction they were offered. And if we examine the character of the doctrines which, we have seen, are held in common amongst all Hindu sects and systems, we can scarcely see a sufficient reason why they should be credited with being a revelation. Some of them,

although evidently the product of reflective thought, are not of a nature to commend themselves to the intelligence of the present day. The doctrine that souls pass from one body into another through many transmigrations, is just as clumsy an hypothesis for accounting for the moral facts of human life, as the Ptolemaic system of crystal spheres for accounting for the phenomena of the heavens. And,—a still stronger objection to it,—there is just as little evidence for the occurrence of these transmigrations, as for the existence of the Ptolemaic spheres. In like manner the doctrine of the final absorption of the human spirit into the universal soul, is not one which satisfies the yearnings of the Western spirit, whatever may be said regarding the Oriental. Inactivity, freedom from all change and all affection, means, to the mind of the present day, little more than annihilation, and against that there is a natural shrinking which causes us to repudiate the doctrine, unless it comes supported by much stronger evidence than appears. Those who are filled with the spirit and energy of the West, cannot help but look upon this doctrine of absorption as the result of that listless spirit of inaction and reverie which is engendered by the hot sun and peculiar physical conditions of the—orient.

§ 8. • If we must consider the common rational elements of Hinduism as the natural results of the



most profound reflection of ancient Hindu sages, we must give a much lower position to many of the legends and doctrines of the sects, and the customs and institutions which sprang up in later times. The natural desire of power on the part of the priest is to be credited with a great share of the religious and social peculiarities of modern Hindus. The fearfully powerful bonds of caste and caste-customs are undoubtedly the result of Brahmanical pride and ambition. The numberless rites and ceremonies of Puranic Hinduism owe their origin to the same cause combined with the deep-seated consciousness in the human heart of sinfulness in the sight of the Most Holy. I do not now refer to the varied modern developments of Hindu sects and systems, because I am now writing to *educated* young men, who are supposed to have rejected the degrading rites and legendary fables of popular Hinduism. But there is an idea prevalent amongst many regarding the performance of idolatrous rites to which I wish to refer. It appears to be held that the performance of these rites is *a harmless custom* kept up by female influence and caste laws; and that there is no harm in intelligent men conforming to these customs, since they do not believe in them. But surely there is harm in celebrating a rite, if you have no faith in its value or efficacy; surely there is harm in continuing a custom which is degrading to your own nature as soon as it

ceases to be accompanied by faith and earnestness ; surely there is harm in practising rites which involve low and degrading conceptions of the Deity, and which for that very reason must be degrading to yourselves. This is a matter of the very highest importance, because it is true universally that rites and ceremonies, even when they are not in themselves essentially wrong and degrading, become so when they are performed without faith. A Christian apostle has said " Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and this is true and applicable everywhere. I wish I could convince every one who reads these letters, that insincere and faithless observance of the rites of religion *must* be degrading and destructive to everything that is best and noblest in human nature. We are intended surely by the Author of our nature to be honest and truthful and sincere beings ; and when insincerity and dishonesty are allowed to enter into the services of religion, there is an element at work which must sooner or later produce the most disastrous consequences. I say this to you, my Hindu friends, because many, perhaps most of you, freely admit that you engage in idolatrous rites without faith or sincerity, but from the power of family and caste influence. This is a melancholy fact amongst Hindus, as it would be melancholy amongst Christians or any other religionists. The saying of the Christian apos-

tle cannot be too strongly impressed upon all hearts  
*"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."*\*

§ 9. I must now make some admissions to you as to things that are valuable and true in the religious teachings which have been handed down to you. There appears to be clearly recognised the universal prevalence of evil amongst men. This is no doubt true, and a truth of the greatest moment. A step of great importance has been taken, when men feel that they are not what they ought to be, that they have come far short of the standard which the law of conscience requires them to reach. It is not, however, so clear that in this admission of universal evil there is always involved the admission of *sin*. The idea of sin arises from the belief in a moral ruler of the universe whose laws we have broken. But when men look upon themselves as only temporarily separate from the universal spirit, and look upon the universal spirit as not essentially distinguished from the universe of finite beings; it does not seem that the idea of sin, as a voluntary breaking of a law imposed upon us by a sovereign ruler different from us, could arise in their minds. Still it is an important truth that all actions, good and bad, are to be followed by their proper consequences, and that men must suffer for the evil deeds which they perform. Again, it is to be admitted that there are many valuable moral precepts and prin-

ciples contained in your sacred books, and many noble and elevating thoughts regarding spiritual things. The duties of domestic and social life, of honesty and fidelity, of benevolence and mercy and many others, are not only recognised but strongly and in many ways impressed upon the minds of Hindus. There are also some peculiarly religious beliefs of great importance found in your sacred writings. Although the rational creed of Hinduism is pantheistic, and the popular creed polytheistic and idolatrous, yet there is clearly conceived the idea that the Divine Being interferes on behalf of men. We cannot read the account of the different incarnations of Vishnu without feeling that amidst all the grotesque and absurd legends there is involved a deep-seated belief that human welfare is a subject of regard and solicitude with God. These and any other good and true features of your national religion I willingly and thankfully admit.

§ 10. It will be admitted, however, by yourselves that the literary and scientific education which is being communicated to the young men of India is rapidly undermining your national faith. The mythological legends of popular Hinduism cannot stand before the light of modern intelligence, and by yourselves must be regarded as superstitions. Even the more rational doctrines of your philosophical systems

have become as antiquated as the old systems of astronomy and cosmogony which so long prevailed in Europe. Such being the case, a great responsibility is laid upon you to awake out of sleep, and look about you for something wherewith to replace the ancient religious beliefs of your nation. We are surrounded by mysteries on all hands ; we cannot help but think about them ; we have the strongest reason to believe that our own happiness and welfare are connected in a most intimate manner with a spiritual world inhabited by spiritual beings ; it appears therefore to follow, that the most important interests of our lives are centered about the objects of religious thought. If it be true, as your fathers believed, that the soul of man is eternal ; if it be true that we are now sinners in the sight of God ; if it be true that there is an eternal world in which we may suffer for the sins which we have committed ; if all these things are true, surely it is not wise for any one to treat them as matters of indifference. Let me therefore entreat you :—look behind and beyond the things of sense ; seek after a knowledge of the truth regarding that spiritual world with which we are so closely connected ; strive to discover something which may take the place of those religious beliefs of your ancestors and your ignorant countrymen which must now be placed in the list of obsolete superstitions ; prepare to meet your God.

### LETTER III.

#### ISLAM.

---

§ 11. I suppose that the majority of my readers will likely be Hindus and not Mahometans, and consequently this letter may appear somewhat unnecessary. Yet partly for the sake of completeness, and partly in the hope that some educated young Mahometans may have these letters placed in their hands, I propose devoting a little space to the consideration of the faith given to the world by the prophet of Arabia. An important distinction between Islam and Hinduism is, that while the latter gradually grew up through the cooperation of many persons and many influences, the former was to a large extent the result of the energy, the piety and the ambition of one man. Moreover, this man began his work of constructing a religious system, having before him the results of the religious life of the Semitic race, especially of the Jews. The consequence is, that in the Koran there is much more of unity and consistency than is to be found in the many authorities of Hinduism. Another consequence is, that the mythological elements which have found such a large place in some ancient religions are absent from

Islam. There is no deification of the powers of nature, no multiplication of divine agents, no pantheistic speculation regarding the universal spirit, no grotesque representation of so-called divine beings. Allah is One and Eternal and the Creator of all things and the merciful Governor of all. Human imperfection and sin are also recognised in the Koran and many moral precepts of a high order are inculcated. The aim of human life is not, in the Koran, freedom from the changes and activity of personal existence as amongst the Hindus, but is the attainment of a position in paradise. This heaven of the Mussulman is—

“Described as consisting of shaded gardens abounding with delicious fruits, watered by flowing streams, filled with black-eyed Húris, and replete with exquisite corporeal enjoyments. It must be admitted that spiritual pleasures and the favour of God are also said to form part of its delights, and that the permanence of man's personality is implied. But a holy God is still immeasurably removed from His creatures ; and intimate union with Him, or even admission to His presence is not the central idea of beatitude.”\*

§ 12. The idea of a divine incarnation is absent from the sacred book of Islam. Mahomet is only a prophet of Allah, a great religious teacher and leader, an enthusiast in the propagation of what he believes, but not in any sense a mediator. His followers are to

obtain the rewards of their religion by faithfulness and obedience to their leader, by the performance of moral virtues to one another, by valour in propagating their faith and destroying the infidels, and by "repentance, the performance of prayers, fasting, alms, pilgrimages and the constant repetition of certain words (especially parts of the Koran)." In this way salvation is to be obtained and the blessings of paradise enjoyed. Thus Mahometanism may be described as a form of Theism free to a great extent from mythological elements, and especially from the corrupting influences of idolatry. It is a Theism, moreover, having an historical human leader, a very powerful system of moral discipline, but mingled with gross sensual elements, and a form of worship in which ritualism appears now to have the ascendancy over the spiritual act. There is no doubt much in this which has served in many places to counteract the idolatrous practices and corrupting effects of what is called heathenism; and I am willing to admit that the moral discipline of Islam has frequently resulted in the production of a moral character of a very high order. But it must also be admitted, on the other hand, that the sensualizing influences of parts of the Koran, introduced no doubt for the purpose of stimulating the activity and securing the fidelity of those who were not open to higher motives, have had a



very debasing effect upon the Mussulmans. This effect is now seen in the weakness and corruption of those governments which have been for centuries in the hands of the Moslim, and in the moral inefficiency of Islam wherever it is now established. The wonderful intellectual activity, for a long time exhibited by the followers of Mahomet, appears to be now a thing of the past, and was probably formerly the result not so much of a pure religious creed as of the newly excited feelings of unity and nationality and military zeal by which we know they were inspired. And with the subsidence of these feelings, there has taken place the loss of intellectual activity and moral strength, and the substitution for them of ignorance and effeminacy. The state of Turkey and Egypt and every country where Islam has prevailed will bear out these words. I must ask my Mahometan readers, if I have any, to read these sentences with patience and thoughtful forbearance; I know it is not a pleasant thing for one who has faith in anything, to hear the object of his faith spoken of disparagingly, or to have its deficiencies and imperfections pointed out. But if the institutions which we have long cherished be really imperfect and corrupt, it will do us no good to remain blindly ignorant of that fact. It is surely much better for seamen to discover in time that the ship in which they are sailing is rotten, than to go on

with her to a watery destruction. It is surely much better for you, my Mahometan friends, to examine the ship in which you are sailing, than to trust blindly to it until it is broken up and destroyed.

§ 13. I have said that the essential character of Islām as a religious system is described by the term Theism with, however, the addition of an historical prophet and a particular code of morals and form of ritual. The peculiarities which distinguish Mahometan Theism from Theism in general are perhaps scarcely of sufficient importance to be considered in these brief letters. Probably my Mahometan readers will not be numerous, but those who do favour me with their attention, will admit that that by which Islām must stand or fall, is not its connection with the prophet, but its peculiar religious doctrines regarding God, the future life, and man's relations to both. Although Mahomet professed to receive revelations from God, he personally is not an essential part of the revelation; he is only the medium through which it is made. We may therefore lay aside an examination of his own personal character and work, and the peculiar institutions which he founded, in favour of more important matters. And as I intend in a future letter to discuss forms of Theism as found in India, I now refer you to that, for an examination of the essential religious elements of that Theism which is

embodied in the revelations of the Arabian prophet. One remark, however, I wish to make regarding the relations existing between Mahometan Theism and that which prevailed amongst the Jews. There can be no doubt but Mahomet was acquainted, more or less, with the sacred writings of the Jews; the Jews and the Arabians belonged to the same great Semitic race; and it is more than probable that the theistic doctrines of the Koran are derived more or less directly from the Bible. But that which is most important in the old Jewish theistic faith is wanting in the Koran. The Jewish prophets, while recognising the *present* government of Jehovah, turned their eyes anxiously forward to a *future* time when the Eternal would send into the world a Messiah, an Anointed Saviour, who should deliver His people. The idea of this coming Messiah is the most important element of the religious belief of the later Jews; and this element is entirely omitted from the revelations of Mahomet. Thus the Mahometan faith is a Theism having a historical human prophet, a code of moral and ritual laws, and a promise of future rewards in paradise; but without a Saviour sent by divine love to rescue man from sin and death. And as I intend in future letters to bring before you the claims of such a Saviour, I now ask you to keep your minds open to the conviction that there is a divinely appointed way to life.

and a blessed immortality which is not pointed out in the revelations of your prophet.

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*Note to Letters II and III.*

In addition to Hinduism and Islam, there is in India a comparatively small proportion of the people who hold the ancient Persian faith. The Parsis, settled chiefly in the island of Bombay and parts of the country northward, have brought with them the fire-worship established for so many centuries in their ancestral country. With reference to this form of faith I might use the language, with some modifications which I have already applied in my second letter to the ancient faith of the Hindus. The religious conceptions of the Parsis may be described generally as a spiritualized form of nature-worship, in which the important element, fire, is taken to symbolize the unseen spirit who operates in all things. As a spiritualized form of nature-worship, it is probably the purest in existence; but its claims upon the faith of its adherents must depend upon the answer to the question—Whether there is a true revelation from the Divine Being intended to make known unto us things most important for our best welfare? If there is such a revelation, it ought surely to supersede all merely human conceptions and speculations regarding the unseen spiri-

tual world. I wish therefore to refer my Parsi readers also to my future letters in which I shall lay before them the claims of one who professed to be the Revealer of God and the Saviour of man.



## LETTER IV.

### RELIGIOUS NESCIENCE.

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§ 14. I come now to the consideration of a mode of thought regarding religious questions which appears to prevail pretty extensively amongst the educated classes in India. Probably one great cause of its prevalence here is, that it is a natural reaction from the extreme of credulity which has for so many centuries found a lodgment in the Hindu mind. The legendary tales of the gods of the Hindu pantheon are now no longer received with confidence; English literature, science, and philosophy have divested them of all their credibility. These ancient heir-looms of the Hindu nation being thus swept away from the mind of the intelligent, there arises a natural repugnance to any doctrine whatever regarding the unseen Ruler of all. Since the doctrines which were for so long entertained have proved untrustworthy, it is not to be wondered at that other doctrines should be looked at with suspicion or rejected with disgust. It is scarcely to be wondered at, that there should be a very general

tendency to avoid questions of religion altogether as being unprofitable or beyond the sphere of certain knowledge. This is a natural reaction from the extreme credulity of a generation or two ago, and I presume it is to be expected that this reaction should continue for some time to come. Further, there is no doubt but this tendency has been stimulated and confirmed by the teachings of some modern British philosophers who regard all religious thought as beyond the province of human reason. These writers tell us that we are capable of knowing only the things which we can perceive by our senses or become conscious of in our minds, and that even the existence of God and the spiritual world are beyond the sphere of knowledge and even of conception. The consequence is, that there is no science except that of sensible facts and things, that there is no knowledge except what is given in human experience, that the religious beliefs of past ages, in so far as they were concerned about divine things, were mere pious fancies, and that all thought about God and a future life now, is only a delusion and a snare. I have reason to believe that opinions such as these, arising partly from the natural reaction to which I have referred, and partly from the influence of modern sceptical philosophers, are beginning to prevail widely amongst you to whom I venture to address these letters; and it is

my desire now to say some serious words regarding this mode, or rather this rejection, of religious thought.

§ 15. If I am right in attributing the prevailing indifference to religious things partly to the natural reaction from a condition of excessive religiousness, I may be justified in offering some remarks with reference to this subject. It is perhaps a universal rule that all reactions are extreme in their character, and therefore injurious. In political matters a state of despotism in which the liberty and privileges of the subject are forcibly taken away or interfered with, is very likely to be followed by a condition of anarchy in which lawlessness and riot make good order impossible. This resulting anarchy is the rebound from the previous condition of despotism, and is just as injurious to the welfare of the people. In a state of reaction, people are incapable of judging calmly; their minds are filled with disgust at the condition of things from which they have escaped; and they condemn indiscriminately everything which has any relation to the past. In religious matters a period of reaction is as unreasonable as in political. Illustrations of both are found in the time of disorder and riot and godlessness which followed the French revolution, and in the somewhat similar period which followed the puritanical reign of Cromwell in England. Now, what I wish to point out to you is, that the pré-



sent tendency of religious thought amongst the educated young men of India is not normal or healthy. It is only within the last fifty years or so, that the process of liberation from the superstitions of centuries has begun, and it is not to be expected that your minds could be in a state for judging calmly regarding the great questions of religion. If you feel a tendency to be disgusted with all religious things, as I believe many do, be assured that this is not a healthy state of mind, and is something which you should try to correct. The questions of religion are great and ever-living realities, and are not to be put aside by our feelings of disgust or disinclination with reference to them. And if you do not think about them now seriously and sincerely, the time may come when you will regret that you did not, for it will then be too late.

§ 16. But probably there is a large number of you who justify your repudiation of all religious thought upon so called scientific grounds. You have read certain philosophical writings of modern times, in which it is maintained that all knowledge of God and the spiritual world is impossible, and that our minds are profitably occupied only when engaged with the objects and relations of the present sensible universe. And you adopt the principles of what is called the Positive Philosophy as the ground for your

rejection of all thought about religion. I wish to say something about this, although I feel that a full discussion of it would take me far beyond the limits within which I desire to confine these letters. And, first, let me indicate, as simply as possible, the essential principle of this mode of thought. And in doing so, you must allow me to use a term of a technical kind more appropriate for a philosophical book than for a series of popular letters. This term is *phenomenon*, and it means anything, either material or mental, which may be the object of direct knowledge. When we see or smell a beautiful or odorous flower, when we hear a sound, when we are conscious of some feeling, thought, or resolution in our own mind, we may call all these objects of our knowledge phenomena. Now the adherents of this system of Religious Nescience which I am considering, generally hold that we can know or legitimately think about nothing but phenomena. And as God and the human soul and all spiritual beings are not phenomena, not objects of sense-knowledge or consciousness, they of course hold that they cannot be known or rightly thought about. This principle necessarily excludes all religion properly so called from human thought, because religion, as it has been understood all over the world since it first began to be an element of human life, is concerned with objects which are not phenomenal.

Even the followers of the grossest forms of idolatry do not look upon the material idols of wood or stone or metal as their *gods*, but only as the *dwelling places* or *symbols* of unseen spiritual beings. Hence, if this positive or phenomenal philosophy be correct, the whole of the religious history of the world is the record only of a series of delusions of which the human race since the beginning of religious thought have been the victims.

§ 17. Before admitting the illegitimacy and delusiveness of all religious thought, we ought surely to examine, whether the principle upon which its illegitimacy is based, be correct or not. That principle, I have pointed out, is *that nothing but phenomena, and their relations, and generalizations from them* is capable of being known or thought about. Now I wish to show you that we are *compelled*, by an intellectual necessity of our nature, to think about things which are *not phenomenal*. And in order to do so, I shall take a few simple illustrations. Suppose that we smell some sweet-scented flower; we have a pleasant sensation. That sensation of which we are conscious is the *phenomenon which we know*; but we must believe that there is some cause in the flower which leads to the production of our sensation; and this cause cannot itself be a sensation, nor is it directly known to us. Here is a case in which, from a known phenomenon,

we are compelled to infer the existence of an unknown cause. Again, when we see some coloured object, we have a sensation of coloured light in the eye; this sensation of colour is the phenomenon which we know; but we are compelled to infer the operation of some unknown power which, striking upon the nerves of our eyes, produces the colour. This unknown power cannot be a sensation, because a sensation exists only in a mind; what it is we cannot directly tell, although we may form various hypotheses regarding its nature. At all events, we are compelled to infer the operation of some cause, which we usually call light, to account for the phenomenal effect which we see, namely, colour. Again, we are brought into contact with some moving body, and we press our hand against it; we exert muscular force in resisting the motion of the body, but it still presses against us. In this case we are conscious only of a certain sensation of effort in our muscles; but we are compelled to infer the operation of a resisting force in the external object. This external resisting force is something which we do not know directly,—it is not phenomenal; but yet we cannot avoid inferring its existence and thinking about it.

§ 18. In the previous paragraph I have pointed out to you that there are certain natural agents and forces which are not phenomenal, the existence and

operation of which we are compelled to infer and think about. In very primitive and ignorant times, people used to suppose that many of these natural agents and forces were spirits or deities ; that is, they supposed these inferred forces were possessed of a personal and spiritual nature like their own. In this they were doubtless mistaken, as we have come now to believe ; but their mistake shows the necessity that exists in the human mind, of believing in a world of unseen and not directly known powers, as the causes of the sense-objects which we immediately know. If, however, we examine higher classes of phenomena than the objects of sense, and even the more complicated relations of the objects of sense themselves, we shall find ourselves compelled to infer the existence of something more wonderful and exalted than the physical powers to which I have referred. Amongst the objects of sense we perceive many wonderful relations ; things are connected together in very extraordinary ways. Bodies fall to the ground according to certain uniform laws ; water evaporates from the surfaces of seas and rivers, clouds are formed and carried over the land ; rain falls and fertilizes the earth, all according to regular laws. The sun sends forth heat and light and power, by which the surrounding planets are warmed, enlightened, and kept revolving in their appropriate orbits ; all the heavenly bodies hold their

positions and move in their orbits according to the regular operation of unchangeable law. Amongst men too, wonderful relations exist and wonderful facts are found. Human society is a most complicated structure, in which numberless influences and tendencies and passions find a place, and yet everything goes on with a wonderful degree of harmony and order. Thus, after examination, we discover that this universe of ours is a most complicated system, composed of the most diverse materials, and yet all exhibiting an extraordinary kind and degree of harmony. There is evidently a *unity and harmony* in the universe, and in thinking about this, we are *compelled to infer* some cause by which we may account for it. And this inferred cause cannot be amongst the phenomena themselves, nor can it be simply a statement of the unity and harmony, as some would have us to believe. It appears to me, and I trust you will agree with me, that in accounting for the wonderful order of the universe as it now exists, we are compelled to go beyond and beneath the universe to some Power and Intelligence capable of producing it.

§ 19. We are told, however, that this wonderful universe of sensible objects, and harmonious relations, and mental actions and passions, is the result of a long series of development from some original matter and force in which there was no intelligence; and that

the higher forms of life as well as all mental activity have arisen, according to natural laws, from simpler elements in which there was neither life nor mind. I cannot enter into a discussion of this elaborate theory of development in these brief letters, but I wish to let you know the principle upon which I feel myself compelled to judge of it. When I observe any phenomenon which I am desirous of accounting for, I cannot be satisfied, unless I infer a cause which is *adequate to produce* the effect; I feel myself compelled by an intellectual necessity, to think of something which is able to produce the result in question. Now you will admit that there is a kind of activity in our minds, which you cannot observe in the motion or heat or light or electricity of the physical universe; and you will admit that these physical agents are not the same as the life which causes trees to grow and animals to perform their functions. No one has ever yet shown that mechanical forces can convert themselves into living powers, nor that mere vegetable or animal life can develop itself into mind. Now, however it may be with you, I find it quite impossible for me to believe that the worlds of life and mind can arise out of something which is not possessed of life and mind; I cannot believe that mere mechanical power can give rise to life, or that the vital force can produce thought or volition. No scientific reasonings

or experiments have demonstrated the possibility of either the one transformation or the other. And to my mind, it is impossible to believe it, because I am compelled to infer a cause which is adequate to produce the effect.

§ 20. It appears to be a necessity with us to infer the existence and operation of some cause which produces all the effects, physical, vital, mental and moral, which make up the universe as it exists; and this cause cannot be thought to be the universe of phenomena itself, nor any part or element of it. But this conclusion is inconsistent with the position of the positive philosophy, in which it is maintained that phenomena alone are objects of knowledge or thought. If therefore you are satisfied that we are intellectually compelled to look beyond and beneath phenomena for an explanation of their cause, the only other question that remains is, What is the nature of this inferred cause? Is it an unintelligent material force, or an intelligent and moral spiritual Being? In other words,—Is the cause of this wonderful universe, of which we form a part, to be thought under the form of the lowest kind of force which we can conceive, or the highest kind of activity which we can conceive? This alternative I have endeavoured to throw light upon in the last paragraph. In accounting for any effect or series of effects, I am compelled to infer a




cause adequate to produce them; and I find myself incapable of understanding or believing that mechanical material force is, of itself, working, according to its own laws, capable of producing the highest vital, mental and moral phenomena of the universe. I am therefore driven to the other term of the alternative, and led to believe that the great first cause of all things is to be conceived under the highest form of existence, that is, as a living, intelligent and virtuous Being. But this conclusion is inconsistent with the mode of thought which I have called Religious Nescience. If we are compelled to think of such a Being and to believe that He exists, we are necessarily led to the highest object of religious contemplation, because this living, intelligent, and virtuous Being, the cause of our universe, is God.

§ 21. The inference of some power different from the universe as its cause I believe to be an intellectual necessity; and I believe we are thinking most in accordance with the laws of our nature, when we attribute to that cause intellectual and moral powers somewhat like our own. It cannot be denied that, when we try to think of the relations between God and the universe, we find ourselves involved in difficulties which we cannot explain. This is to be expected, because, although our minds are so constituted as to lead us to the conception

and belief of an intelligent and virtuous first cause, they are not adequate to the full comprehension of that cause. • We occupy a position *in* the universe; we cannot get beyond or above it; we cannot get a view of it except as forming a part of it; it appears, therefore, impossible from the nature of the case that we should, unaided, get a complete knowledge of its secret springs or its relations to its Author. But although this is to be fully and freely admitted, we are not therefore to conclude that we should cut ourselves off from all intellectual relations with the Author of our being. Because we cannot solve all the problems connected with the relations between God and the universe, it seems utterly unreasonable that we should give up thinking about the subject altogether, and retire into the heartless and hopeless condition of Religious Nescience. The history of mankind shows that man is essentially and decidedly religious; that there are feelings and yearnings in the human heart which connect him inseparably with the unseen spiritual world; and that the mode of thought to which we are referring, is utterly destructive of what is purest and best in our nature. Although nations may make great mistakes and be led sadly astray in religious thought and feeling, that is no reason for banishing religion altogether, or for ceasing to seek the truth regarding it. This

is seen especially when we consider that religion is not merely a matter of philosophical speculation, but one of profoundly practical interest. If it be true that there is an ill-wise and all-good Author and Governor of the human race, and that the highest human interests are under His control, the subject of religion cannot be a matter of indifference, and a deliberate acting upon the principles of Religious Nescience must be the highest folly. I am therefore constrained to urge you to leave this position, and advance with me to the consideration of the mode of religious thought next in order, I mean Theism.



## LETTER V.

### THEISM.

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§ 22. I tried in my last letter to shew you, why it is impossible for us to remain satisfied with a system which cuts us off intellectually and morally from everything except this sensible universe; and I endeavoured to indicate to you the foundation, in our nature, of our belief in a supra-sensible world. This belief is found, as you are aware, amongst primitive polytheistic peoples; but amongst them it is not reduced to a *rational* belief, because they do not recognize the *unity* of the power which governs the universe. Human reason in its natural operation strives to reduce all objects and events of knowledge to unity; and until men have made some considerable progress towards the understanding of the unity and harmony of this wonderful universe in which we live, it is impossible for them to attain to a genuine conception of the all-pervading unity of God. I now take the liberty of assuming that you whom I am now addressing, have gone with me thus far, and accept the unity of the universe and of its Author; I assume that you

are Theists, using that term in its most general sense. I am aware, however, that people who accept the unity of God's nature, do not agree frequently regarding His character and His relations to the universe. There are, in particular, two great phases of belief regarding these subjects. On the one hand, there are those who identify God with the universe, believing that He is immanent in all things, that He is the substance or the inherent force which shines forth in the sun, energizes in the various forces of nature, lives in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and thinks in the human mind. This is usually known by the name of Pantheism. On the other hand, there are those who believe that God, although working in His universe, is essentially separate from it, having had a separate personal existence before it was brought into being, and continuing to have a separate personal existence simultaneously with it. This view may be called Theism in the special sense of the term, or, as we shall call it, Personal Theism. I must ask your attention in succession to these two different phases of theistic belief.

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*Pantheism.*

§ 23. The doctrines of Pantheism, in one form or other, are very familiar in India. They are found in

many of the Hindu sacred writings; they form the basis of much of the Hindu philosophy; they are widely prevalent amongst the people. You are aware that the essential principle of pantheism is that All is God, or God is All. But this statement without explanation does not express the doctrine as it is usually understood. To say that the gross material things which are around us constitute the Divine Being, would be a very crude and incorrect statement of the doctrine. The universe which we see and touch and know by the senses, you must conceive to be, not the real universe, but a sensible gross manifestation of an underlying spiritual reality. This underlying and all-pervading spiritual reality manifests its energy in the heavenly bodies, the physical and vital phenomena of the world, and the thoughts and emotions of the human mind. This unseen but omnipresent reality, of which all real things and agents form a part, and of which all phenomena are manifestations, is God. The process of the unfolding of the universe is the process of God's thought; all things in the material and the spiritual universe are the effects of God's activity. This identification of all things with God is recommended to reasonable minds by the unity which it appears to give to the universe. There is no doubt but there is in the human mind a strong craving after the discovery of

unity, and in pantheism this craving is satisfied. There is a conception of God which puts Him outside of His own universe, drives Him away into the region of the unknown, and thus leaves the universe under the control of the blind natural and moral laws which He has established ; against this conception, pantheism protests, and in so far as it does so, I think it to be on the side of truth. Having made these admissions, I desire to point out, why I cannot accept the pantheistic doctrine as correct.

§ 24. The doctrine of pantheism appears to me to be inconsistent with my belief in my own personal existence. I must ask you to look within yourselves and see, whether you are not conscious of a feeling of independence—of a belief that *you* are different from everything around you and from everything even within you. Do you, can you, look upon yourselves as identical with the natural forces which you believe are playing incessantly around you ? However this may be with you, I cannot ; I feel myself bound to believe that I have, or rather that I am, a personal being, different from everything around me, and different from Him from whom my being has come. This universal belief of man (for I think it is universal) is surely of greater importance and force than any speculative reasoning. Some perhaps may say that this universal belief is a universal delusion, and that the conviction

of each person that he is a distinct personal being is an illusion of consciousness. This, however, cannot be admitted, unless good reasons are shown why or how in this case consciousness deceives us. And these reasons have yet to be alleged. No doubt there are some universal illusions which we have been able to discover, as for example the perception of distance by sight is an illusion,—the sensation of colour being in the eye and not out upon objects. But the unity of our consciousness, the knowledge that we exist separate and distinct from everything else, although holding intimate relations with other things and beings, is not an illusion, but a simple and undeniable fact. And this fact of my own personal existence which I believe, makes it impossible for me to believe that I am simply a drop in the great ocean of infinite being.

§ 25. But there is another reason, still stronger, which prevents me from accepting pantheistic teaching. The existence of conscience in my mind is a most important fact. I have a feeling of personal responsibility for the actions which I perform. It makes little difference to me, how this sense of responsibility has arisen, whether it is an original part of my nature, or the result of education under authority; it now constitutes an essential element in the mind of all mature men, and is a strong evidence of human personality. This moral sense convinces you and me



and every one of *sin*, of the fact that we have offended against a just and righteous law, and that we are responsible to the Lawgiver. And in this very acknowledgment of sin, do we not put ourselves in a separate position from Him against whom we sin? In the very conviction of personal responsibility, do we not implicitly hold that we are different from Him to whom we are responsible? It appears to me that a genuine sense of personal responsibility cannot co-exist in the same mind with a clear belief that we are simply parts of which Deity is the whole. The presence of a sense of sin in the human mind is a most emphatic protest against pantheistic doctrine; and I beg of you to appeal to your own hearts and consciences, and to examine your own lives, to see whether you have not sinned against those laws of purity and righteousness and love, which you know have been established for human guidance.

§ 26. Consider still further, what a horrible conception you must entertain concerning God, if you hold pantheistic doctrines. If God is all, and all is God, you make God really the author of all the evil in the universe. In this case you must hold, either that there is no sin in the universe at all, and that "whatever is is right"; or, that God is the source and author of all sin, and therefore a being infinitely worse, instead of infinitely better, than ourselves. But against

the former alternation the conscience of all mankind from the beginning of time till now emphatically protests. If there is any fact more firmly established than another, it is the fact of human sin. The religious rites and sacrifices of all nations in whom a moral sense has at all shown itself, proclaims their belief that they have sinned. The conscience of man, in so far as that conscience has been awakened, admits the terrible fact that sin has cast its foul blight upon our nature. The fearful passions that exist in the human heart, the hatred, the jealousy, the lust, the covetousness, the whole brood of passions too numerous to mention, are terrible evidences of the fact, that men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We cannot therefore admit the former horn of the dilemma which pantheists must meet; neither can we admit the latter, since to conceive God as the author of all evil, appears so fearfully repulsive, that we wonder that any human mind could succeed in doing it. It appears to me, that as long as men entertain any genuine sense of sin, pantheism is to them an impossibility; and that pantheism can prevail only where the moral sense has become so weak, that it has ceased to condemn sin and to perceive its awful sinfulness.

§ 27. There is another reason which I must ask your permission to allege. You are aware that in your country, pantheistic ideas have prevailed for many

centuries. Is it not a fact that amongst your people the sense of personal responsibility and independence is to a great extent wanting? People in this country appear to believe more in *fate* than in any other with which I am acquainted. A young man in some way gets the idea that it is *fated* that he shall not pass a certain examination or succeed in a certain enterprise; the consequence is, that he sees no use in making exertions; all his energies are paralyzed. The ability to make independent effort amongst the young men of India is to a great extent wanting, as compared with the independence and enterprise of young men in other countries. There is a want of personal moral courage here, likewise, which it is painful to observe. I am not prepared to say that these moral characteristics of the Hindus are *the result* of the many centuries of pantheistic belief which have passed over the race; nor can I say that pantheism is the result of these moral traits. But this I believe that they are closely connected in some way; and that if there were amongst your people a stronger sense of personal responsibility and freedom, and a clearer conviction of sin, and a greater degree of moral courage, your pantheistic ideas would disappear like clouds before the sun. And, conversely, I have little doubt that the ceasing to hold pantheistic ideas would exercise a very important influence in elevating the moral tone.

of your people. "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."

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*Personal Theism.*

§ 28. I now pass on to the second phasis of theistic belief to which I referred, and request you to accompany me in an examination of that view of God's nature which I have indicated by the term at the head of this paragraph. I have pointed out to you, that when we look within ourselves and compare ourselves with other things and persons around us, we are compelled to recognise our *personality*; we believe that we are distinct voluntary agents, different from the powers and objects of nature around us, and capable of exercising power over them. Now it is granted on all hands that God is not directly known to us, although we may most firmly believe in His existence. And the question arises—since we do not directly know God, how are we to conceive Him? We may obtain an answer to this question by considering generally how we conceive things unknown. *In all cases when anything is unknown to us, we can conceive it only by representing it as similar to something known.* If any object which we have never seen is described to us, we cannot understand the description, unless a comparison is made with something which we have

seen. In trying to understand the manner in which any of the unknown forces of nature operate, we can only do so by clothing them in forms familiar to us. For example, we do not know the nature of light before it comes into contact with our eyes and there produces a sensation. But scientific men try to make the unknown force, which produces the sensations of heat and colour, intelligible by representing it as vibrations in a fluid called ether, which is supposed to be something like ordinary atmospheric air, only much thinner. Now there is no certainty that this ether even exists, but it is quite certain that something exists or some power is exerted which produces heat and light; and the ethereal vibrations are conceived, in order to render this unknown power intelligible to our minds. And so, in attempting to conceive anything which is not directly known, we are compelled to represent it under forms with which we are familiar in our experience.

§ 24. Let us now apply this principle to our conception of God. All who have reached the belief of one Divine Being, regard Him as the origin of this universe—the infinite First Cause. But in attempting to conceive Him, I maintain that we are compelled, in reason, to represent Him under the forms of our own nature. Our own nature is the only thing which we directly know; in our own minds we get the first

idea of cause and power ; and we cannot conceive the objects and powers of the universe, except under forms supplied by our own minds. And it is the same in our attempt to conceive the great Cause of the universe. If we represent Him according to the laws of our intelligence, we must represent Him as a personal Being, consciously exercising His power in producing and governing the world. I assume that we ought to conceive Him under the highest forms which we are capable of conceiving. I assume that we believe Him to be—not the lowest kind of agency which exists, but the highest,—not a mere mechanical force, but that which can be the cause of the highest intellectual and spiritual beings who exist. Assuming these things, I maintain that we are not acting according to our reason, unless we conceive Him under the highest forms of which we have any experience, *viz.*, our own personal being. We know ourselves to be persons, endowed with conscious intelligence, and a power of voluntary action and a moral sense, and we consider these characteristics to be essential,—if we did not possess them, we should be a different kind of being from what we are. These essential elements of our own nature we attribute to the infinite First Cause ; we clothe Him in the forms of our own nature purified and freed from every imperfection ; and thus we conceive Him as the Highest, the Wisest, the Best

whom it is in our power to conceive. Thus I consider that this view of God's nature which I have called Personal Theism, is the most reasonable which we can possibly take.

§ 25. But perhaps some of you are thinking that this view of God's nature is the same as what you have frequently heard condemned under the name of anthropomorphism. You are aware that all polytheistic nations represent their gods under human forms, give to them human relations, and a human history. In your own legendary accounts of your national deities, the representation of divine beings, as being endowed with the faculties of men and women, is quite universal. It is true that in your philosophical books, this anthropomorphism is more or less laid aside, but in all cases where any of the deities are intended to be brought within the range of human thought, they are arrayed in human forms, except indeed in those grosser forms of representation where animals are employed. Now it is undeniable that this anthropomorphism has generally resulted in a very degrading conception of God ; it is undeniable that the gods of the nations have been usually magnified images of human depravity and corruption. But what does this show? It shows first, that human nature is degraded and corrupt; and that out of the impure human heart, there cannot arise a pure and true know-

ledge of God. But it shows also, that this anthropomorphic way of conceiving God is that which is most in accordance with our nature, and that if our own minds were only purified from all imperfections and degrading elements, we might in this way obtain a conception of the Divine Being somewhat worthy of His greatness and holiness. That which is objectionable in anthropomorphism, is *not* the method of conceiving God in itself—for that is founded deeply in our nature, *but* the immoral, and grotesque, and absurd elements which have so commonly been introduced into anthropomorphic conceptions. The attempt to conceive God as *Pure Being*, or any other abstraction, is simply an impossibility, at least as long as our minds are constituted as they now are. And it is not merely our intellectual nature to which such a conception is impossible; our moral nature also revolts from it. We believe that God holds an important personal relation to ourselves; He is our Creator, our Father, our Judge. We cannot think of these relations except as held by a being who is in some respects like ourselves; the idea of having some abstract idea such as the Absolute, or Pure Being, or any other, in the relation of Creator, Father, or Judge is simply and utterly absurd. This leads me to refer to some teachings which have from time to time been uttered by the leaders of the Brahma Samáj. They have pro-




fessed to hold what they call *Pure Theism*, as distinguished from what they condemn as *Anthropomorphic Theism*. From what I have said above, you will see that I consider what they call *Pure Theism* quite unintelligible.

§ 26. I must now refer you to a very important point in our conception of God. The fact that we are able to conceive God only in one particular way, *viz.*, by attributing to Him human personality and conscious intelligence and virtue, gives us no guarantee of the *truth* of our conception. We cannot by the exercise of our reason assure ourselves that our conception agrees with the reality ; rather we have every reason to suspect that any conception which we can form must come very far behind the reality. The language of the Hebrew Scriptures agrees with our own reason in this matter: "Who by searching can find out God ? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection ?" Thus our rational nature, while it carries us inevitably to the conception and belief of a Supreme Being endowed with conscious intelligence and will, leaves us in a state of strange uncertainty regarding the *accuracy* of our conceptions. We are carried, as it were, to the boundary of a dark abyss in which we may feel certain that there reigns some Power holding intimate relations with ourselves ; but we must acknowledge that our highest attempts to

understand that Power are, like the glimmerings of a taper in a dark cavern, sufficient only to make darkness visible. Hence the infinitely various and grotesque conceptions of God amongst different people; hence the want of agreement and certainty amongst men, when endeavouring to understand the nature and the ways of the Most High. Truly the most powerful human reason is weakness itself, when it attempts to deal with divine problems.

§ 27. There are, however, some means by which human conceptions of God may be corrected and purified. Important amongst these, is the advancement of scientific knowledge. As the laws of nature become more accurately known, and as it is discovered that the operations of nature are carried on with wonderful regularity and manifestations of wisdom, it is manifest that people's views of God's character and operations must be accordingly modified. It is especially the discoveries of the facts and laws of the mental and moral world, which greatly influence human conceptions of Deity. The facts of our own nature are not arbitrary and irregular things; they too are governed by laws. Hence the enlightened human reason, although still conceiving God in the anthropomorphic way, banishes that arbitrariness, and grotesqueness, and immorality which abound amongst the mythological fables of primitive peoples. But still, although we

admit the utmost effects of enlightenment and culture, in correcting human conceptions of the Divine Being, we must yet maintain the inability of human reason to assure itself of the truth of its conceptions, or to advance with certainty beyond the range of phenomenal things. It is held, however, that there are other ways than ordinary human reason by which our knowledge of divine things may be extended and assured. And there are in particular two ways of obtaining this kind of knowledge, to which I wish to call your attention, since these two ways have already and frequently been brought under your notice. It is of importance for you to understand them thoroughly, as many other things connected with religion depend upon the manner in which we think the knowledge of divine things is given to us. These two modes of obtaining this knowledge I shall indicate by their usual names, Intuition and Revelation, but shall leave the consideration of them to succeeding letters.



## LETTER VI.

### INTUITION.

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§ 28. The subject of the present letter is one with which I presume you are familiar. You have heard many leaders of thought, both philosophical and religious, speaking of the power of Intuition which is possessed by the human mind. And you are no doubt aware that strong claims are made on behalf of Intuition as a source of knowledge. It is my desire in this letter to enquire into the meaning of this term and its different applications, and to ascertain what kind of knowledge we are able to get through it. You are aware that the simple English meaning of Intuition is Insight,—the power of looking directly at anything and thus knowing it. But there are several different applications of this term which we must discriminate from one another, if we would wish clearly to understand our subject. Probably the simplest application of the term is to the direct knowledge which we have of the relations between objects of sense. For example, when we see two sticks or two lines placed side by side, we know by direct compari-

son, whether they are equal or unequal. A musician is able to tell whether two sounds have the same or different tones. If we see two colours placed together, we know at a glance whether they are the same or different. In all these cases we have that direct knowledge which may very properly be called intuitive. And in this application of the term, Intuition is distinguished from mediate knowledge or Inference. Now it is manifest that, in this sense, Intuition, although giving us most important knowledge, cannot be the source of any *religious* knowledge. It is concerned altogether with phenomena, or rather the relations of phenomena, whereas religion is concerned primarily about objects which cannot be known as phenomena.

§ 29. There is another sense in which the term Intuition is frequently used, in which it appears to be synonymous with a strong, vivid, imagination. A man of genius is said to see by Intuition what other men could understand only after a long process of reasoning, or could not see at all, unless it were shown to them. For example, Sir Isaac Newton, when he saw the apple falling to the ground, by a stroke of his wonderful genius was able to see that the force which drew the apple to the earth, was the same as that which kept the planets in their courses round the sun. This wonderful conclusion might very properly

be called Insight or Intuition; but, whatever term we may apply to such a mental act, it is plain that it is simply the act of a very strong and lively imagination. And it is important to observe that the *object* of this act of Intuition is not a phenomenal thing, an object of the ordinary senses. Newton, in his famous generalisation, was led from visible things to invisible, from the apple which fell to the earth to the unseen and unknown force which binds together the most distant orbs of this wonderful universe. Thus it appears that in this application of the term, Intuition may be concerned about things which we do not directly know, and which we must employ our power of imagination in conceiving. It also appears that Intuition in this application may suggest most important truth. I say *suggest*, because Newton's act of imagination would have been of no scientific value whatever, had it not been *verified* by other observations or reasonings. There have been many great discoveries made in the history of science by acts of Intuition similar to that of Newton; but, in all cases, the act of Intuition, or more properly of imagination, has only suggested the truth, leaving to subsequent investigations the task of verifying or correcting it.

§ 30. Similar to the above is the Intuition of the poet who is able to call up before his imagination invisible things, and describe them in such a way as to

please and excite the emotions of his hearers or readers. There are some minds which are naturally endowed with poetic genius, with the power of *seeing* objects and relations to others invisible. Such minds appear to be characterised by a peculiar elevation and refinement of thought ; they take delight in passing from the gross objects of sense to the ideas suggested by them ; they create a spiritual world of their own in which they like to live. They are not always in search after truth, and they do not therefore take the trouble of verifying their poetic constructions. The objects of their poetic Intuition may be very various, may be connected with the world of nature, the world of human life in all its phases, or the unseen world of spirits. Examples of this kind of Intuition are so numerous that I need scarcely refer to them. Homer amongst the Greeks, and Vyasa amongst the Hindus, are prominent examples. Dante and Milton have penetrated with poetic Insight into the invisible depths of the spiritual universe, and revealed to us sights which at least fill us with admiration for the genius of the seer. Wordsworth and Tennyson have indicated to us the invisible links which bind together the world of nature and of human life with the higher world of spirit. By Intuition such as has been possessed by men like these, noble soul-stirring thoughts have been communicated to man, and no doubt much

has been done to elevate and purify human life. But, as I said before, the primary object of this poetic Intuition is not to discover or communicate truth, but to excite or elevate the emotions of the human heart. No doubt, truth which is otherwise known, may be vividly and effectively presented by the employment of the poetic imagination. And no doubt also, the poet may discover relations and ideas connected with human life which are true and important, and which would not have been discovered without poetic genius. But still it remains true that poetic Intuition is incapable of penetrating, with the certainty of discovering truth, into the invisible universe. Beautiful soul-stirring visions from the invisible may be called up, but who or what is to testify to their truthfulness?

§ 31. There is another application of the term Intuition, which we may call the metaphysical. You are aware that there are certain metaphysical systems of philosophy which attempt to explain how all things in the universe have been evolved from a certain abstract idea. This abstract idea is known under various names, such as the Absolute, the Infinite, the Pure Idea, Pure Being, and so on. These abstractions are the highest generalisations which can be made from concrete things; you try to imagine all concrete qualities to be banished from the universe, and then to think that Pure Being, without any par-



ticular things, is left. Now transcendental philosophers tell us that they are able to know or conceive this abstract Being by Intuition; and then they attempt to show, how the original idea of Being is gradually filled up and enriched with concrete forms of existence. The only question which we have here to consider is, the nature of the Intuition which is at the basis of such systems of thought. By this Intuition it is claimed that we have a knowledge of Absolute Being, and this Absolute Being is identified with God, and thus Intuition is regarded as the source of all religious knowledge. Now it will be a sufficient criticism of this position if I point out, (1) that Absolute Being does not exist, (2) that if it did exist, the Intuition of it would be impossible, and (3) that it cannot be identified with God. So-called Pure Being is simply the highest logical abstraction which we can make from concrete things, and it is simply absurd to attribute to it actual existence. Further, we cannot know or conceive Pure Being, because we can know things only, by distinguishing them from other things; the relation of difference is absolutely essential to knowledge. And again, this abstract Being is not God, because it cannot be a cause; it cannot hold relations with concrete things; it is perfectly empty of all qualities, and therefore destitute of everything which makes up man's idea of the divine

Being. These reasons will, I think, be sufficient to justify us in setting aside the so-called metaphysical Intuition as a source of religious knowledge.

§ 32. There is a modification of the metaphysical Intuition described in the last paragraph, which is considered by many an important element of our knowledge. There are certain ideas and beliefs which are quite universal amongst men. For example, all men have the ideas of space and time ; all men believe in the existence of material things ; all men believe that there is a uniform connection between cause and effect. There are certain self-evident axioms which lie at the basis of every science, and which must be taken for granted, since they cannot be proved by any principles more simple and original than themselves. Now it is held by many that these beliefs are intuitive in their character, not acquired by experience, but arising spontaneously in the mind in consequence of being founded in our constitution. There are many difficult questions connected with these so-called intuitive beliefs, which I do not feel myself called upon now to discuss ; and there are different opinions regarding their character. Although an interesting subject of study, and, in relation to some intellectual and moral problems, of great importance, I shall now do no more than refer to it as one of the applications of the term Intuition. It is not

generally held that these Intuitions give us any religious knowledge directly, although doubtless some of them lie at the basis of our belief in a Deity. But, as I have already\* indicated the rational grounds upon which our belief in God's existence is based, I need not refer to the subject further in this connection. Although we may acknowledge that rational principles of our nature, or intuitions as they are called, do lie at the basis of our belief in God, these intuitions cannot do anything more than lead us to this belief. I have already shown you that mere reason cannot carry us with certainty beyond the precincts of the phenomenal universe. And as the kind of intuition which is the subject of this paragraph consists simply of the fundamental principles of reason, there are no grounds for holding that it can give us any knowledge of divine things beyond affording us the foundation on which our belief in these things rests.

§ 33. I have now passed in review all the applications of the term Intuition which I can think of, and shown, I hope to your satisfaction, that in no sense can it be the source of a certain knowledge of the facts or events of the unseen universe in which dwell the great objects of religious belief. There is no doubt, however, but in some of these senses Intuition plays a very important part in the religious life, and

\* See Letters IV and V.

I now wish to show what that part is. In the preceding paragraph I have admitted that some of the essential principles of our rational nature lie at the basis of our religious belief. This is true especially of that principle or tendency which leads us to infer a cause for every event. The causal judgment is one of the most essential elements of our nature; in fact, we should not be *rational* at all without it, and it is by the aid of this, that we pass from things seen to things unseen, from nature up to nature's God. But beyond this, we cannot, by the aid of reason, with certainty proceed, although we may construct for ourselves conceptions regarding the invisible world, more or less satisfactory to our minds and hearts. This brings me to the consideration of another application of the term Intuition as an element of religious life.

§ 34. I have already referred you to poetic genius as a kind of Intuition. The poet is gifted with a lively and strong imagination by which he can construct images and scenes of wonderful beauty or sublimity, although they may not have any objective reality. The character of these constructions of the poet must depend greatly upon the moral and spiritual tone of his own mind. A man of noble and pure moral character and vivid imagination is able to form conceptions regarding divine things of a very exalting and soul-stirring kind. In fact it seems that

we cannot think about God and His relations to us at all, without employing our imagination in calling up unseen things before our minds. And we can easily suppose, as indeed we know to be a fact, that some men, being of a nobler and purer moral tone than others and gifted with a livelier imagination, are able to form conceptions regarding the invisible universe, which others less gifted could never think of. Such men, even by the natural exercise of their reason and fancy, under the stimulus of strong moral emotions, are able to conjure up before their minds and the minds of others, ideas and images and feelings of wonderful beauty and power. They are the sacred poets of all time ; they see divine things as others cannot see them ; they are inspired with faith and love and heavenly insight, so that they appear as if living in the spiritual world, and as if able to know directly the things of God: They look habitually beneath the external appearances of things, and see their hidden spiritual reality and meaning. Such have been the prophets and seers and sages and poets of all ages and all countries,—men who have guided the moral and religious thought of their time, and have exercised an ennobling influence upon man's character and history. The best thoughts and the purest emotions which have enlightened and warned the human race, have come from men possessing this wonderful gift of

poetic Intuition. And if we believe that the Spirit of God works in the human heart, elevating and purifying it and giving it insight into divine things, we must recognise this form of Intuition as one of the means which God uses to bring the human race nearer to Himself.

§ 35. But the question arises—how are we to know whether these intuitions of the poet or the seer or the sage correspond to divine realities? How are we to know whether their utterances are true? As far as we can tell, they may be simply the result of an unusually lively imagination, clear reason, and pure heart, and although these qualities may excite our admiration, they cannot give us an assurance of the truth of that which is uttered. We cannot directly observe heavenly things and compare them with the utterances of the poetic seer; and the beauty or the nobility of the conceptions of the wise men is not a sufficient ground for our believing in their conformity to reality. Thus, although it appears that this kind of Intuition may be most important in stimulating and building up the religious life, we cannot look to it as a genuine and certain source of religious truth. Assuming that religious truth is given in some other way, the poetic imagination may be of the greatest use in surrounding the truth with a rich and varied clothing of beautiful forms and conceptions, and in stimulating human

desire to seek after and possess the truth. But if there is no other basis for religious belief than poetic Intuition, it appears to me that such a basis may be aptly compared to the shifting clouds which for a while darken the skies and, assuming various forms, finally vanish away. If the human mind is left to its own fancy in constructing the objects and events of the invisible universe, however ennobling or beautiful the structure may be, it must want that element which alone can make it worthy of our confidence,—the certainty that it is true. Having come to this conclusion regarding Intuition, I ask your attention in my next letter to the second alleged source, of religious knowledge to which I referred, *viz.* Revelation.



## LETTER VII.

### REVELATION.

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§ 36. I now proceed to the consideration of the second source of religious knowledge to which I referred. Revelation is distinguished from Intuition in this :—that whereas the latter indicates human striving after a knowledge of the unseen—the effort of the human mind to penetrate into the concealed mysteries of the heavenly world ; the former is the *unveiling* before the human mind of things existing or carried on in the invisible universe, an actual objective manifestation of divine acts or purposes. Intuition is essentially the result of human effort ; Revelation is essentially the result of a divine act,—a communication of otherwise unknown things to the mind of man. Intuition is the endeavour of the human mind to approach to the heavenly world ; Revelation is the actual opening up of the heavenly world to the human mind. From what we have said in the previous letters, you will, I trust, be ready to admit the *necessity* of Revelation as a condition of religious knowledge ; if we are to know anything



positive and certain about God and His relation to us, we cannot arrive at that knowledge by our unaided human reason. It is possible to know the things of the invisible universe only if they are unveiled to our minds by some means different from our own efforts to know them. I have now indicated to you what appears to me the only possible way in which, constituted as we are, we could obtain a knowledge of God's character and acts and designs. Whether such a Revelation has actually been made must be the subject of future consideration. In the mean time I wish to point out some conditions under which it might take place.

§ 37. In previous letters I showed that the human mind is incapable of knowing directly the Great First Cause of all things, and this imperfection of our intellect must continue even after a revelation has been made. The question then arises—how is a revelation possible? If the human mind cannot directly and truly know the things of the spiritual world, how can these things be revealed or made known? It appears, from the nature of the case, that there are two ways in which this might become possible. First, the things to be revealed might be presented not as they exist absolutely, but under such forms and symbols as that they may be intelligible to our minds; and, second, the human mind

might be endowed with some extraordinary power of insight so as to become capable of perceiving things before invisible. The one or the other, or a combination of these two ways, appears to me the only means by which we can possibly know heavenly things. Thus a Revelation, if it is made at all, must be presented under forms and symbols capable of being understood by our minds; or, on the other hand, the human mind must be divinely inspired so as to know things otherwise unknowable; or both of these conditions must be combined. In asserting the necessity of these conditions, I am assuming that God and His acts and purposes are not naturally known to us or capable of being thus known; that the conceptions which we, by reason and imagination, form of divine things are not characterised by that certainty which is necessary as a foundation of belief.

§ 38. In examining any alleged Revelation there are apparently two things to be considered:—first, the forms and symbols under which the divine things are brought within the sphere of human intelligence; and second, the Inspiration of the human mind which enables it to know or comprehend divine things. To the latter of these I wish to turn your attention. And I anticipate a thought which may probably enter your minds, that this Inspiration appears to be essentially the same as the poetic Intuition to which I referred

in my last letter. Both Inspiration and Intuition imply a certain exaltation of man's powers, so that the subject of them is able to conceive ideas which other people are unable to conceive. Both of them may be engaged with the objects of religious belief ; and both may be accompanied by an excitement and elevation of religious emotions. You naturally ask, therefore, what is the difference between them ? How can we distinguish between poetic Intuition and divine Inspiration ? Answering this question from the nature of the case, it would appear plain that poetic Intuition is the result of the natural elevation and excitement of the powers of a man who is possessed of a poetic temperament, while Inspiration is the result of the in-working in the human mind of some divine influence by which the spiritual perception of the subject of it is enabled to perceive the things to be revealed. This distinction between the two things you will, I doubt not, easily understand ; but a greater difficulty remains. How are we enabled to tell whether a person, whose powers are wonderfully excited and his religious emotions quickened, is the subject of poetic Intuition or of divine Inspiration ? I can easily conceive that the one would appear and speak very much like the other ; I can conceive that the divinely inspired prophet should be possessed also of poetic genius, and that one who is possessed merely of

poetic genius should speak in tones of purity and grandeur and power equal to those of the inspired prophet. Such being the case, it would appear to be by no means an easy matter to distinguish between the one and the other, and if we have no means of discrimination except a comparison of the mental state of the two, I should think the distinction impossible.

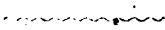
§ 39. Since, therefore, it is impracticable to distinguish between the poetic genius and the inspired prophet by comparing their mental and emotional conditions, it appears that the only criterion left us consists in the nature of that which they utter. We must examine any alleged Revelation, to see whether it bears marks of a divine or a human origin; whether it is of such a nature that it must have originated in a divine unveiling of mysteries, or that it may have been the result, simply of human striving after a knowledge of the divine. If we can be certain that in any particular case a true unveiling of divine mysteries has taken place, we can place confidence in it. If there is nothing in any particular case except human seeking after divine things, we must regard it as characterised at least by uncertainty. What then are the marks which we would naturally suppose should distinguish a divine revelation? This is a question difficult to answer, as it must always be a hazardous thing to assert *a priori* what the nature of

a revelation must be. But if you will allow me, I shall state what appears to me most reasonably to be expected in a divine revelation. In the first place, as we believe that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, we might expect that any Revelation from Him to us would be intended for, and fitted to further the good of man. In the second place, as we believe that the Almighty Creator does not act uselessly or needlessly, we might expect that a Revelation for our good would be such that we could not come to the knowledge of it in any other way except by Revelation. And in the third place, if the exigencies of our condition are such that divine intervention for our good is necessary, we might expect that such evidences of the fact of ~~this~~ intervention and of its nature should be given to us that we should have good reason to place our confidence in them. To the first of these I desire in the remainder of this letter to turn your attention.

§ 40. Our reason points to God as the Creator of this wonderful universe, and when we look out into the universe we observe innumerable tokens of wisdom and goodness. That God is good appears to be a conclusion indicated to us also by our moral nature. We know and approve what is good, although we often do the evil. And since we should attribute to God in perfection whatever is best and highest in our

own nature, we naturally look to Him as the Good Being. But there is nothing more patent and painful than the fact that we are evil, that we are surrounded by evil, that we have evil looming up before us in the future. We have evil within us and around us which we cannot help, evil of the nature of *calamity*; we have evil in us and around us, the result of our own and others' bad actions, evil of the nature of *sin*. We look ahead of us and see that present sin is certain to bring on future wretchedness. We look beyond the range of the present life and find all dark and uncertain. We know not what may be our state after our death; we know not whether we may exist at all, although there are dark doubts and fears which arise upon the contemplation of the valley of the shadow of death. If we do continue to exist after death, there is every reason to believe that present sin and wretchedness will also continue, perhaps in a greatly increased degree. Now if God be good and governs the universe for our welfare, it is surely reasonable to conclude that a Revelation from Him would have some reference to this terrible state of sin and wretchedness in which the human race exists. There is nothing in our present state which appears so much to call for divine intervention and enlightenment; there is nothing which has arisen so universally from the heart of humanity as an acknowledgment

of the presence of evil and a desire to be freed from it. Surely then if God is to give us a Revelation regarding divine things, it will have a practical bearing upon the great terrible realities of our lives. To gratify a mere speculative curiosity of the human mind would appear not to be a sufficient reason why the mysteries of the heavenly world should be unveiled before us. Knowledge about God will be of little use to us, if we are not to hold continued and happy relations with Him. Knowledge about the future existence of our own souls will be of little value unless there is a blessed *life* through eternity to be won or lost. The mysteries of the invisible universe can have little interest to us unless the knowledge of them is of more than mere speculative importance, unless it has a practical relation to our own best welfare. I think therefore that I may ask you to admit that one important distinguishing mark of a divine Revelation should be a manifest design of promoting the best interests of the human race, and especially of freeing men from the power of sin and wretchedness under which they are now held.



## LETTER VIII.

### REVELATION.—(*Continued*).

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§ 41. In my last I pointed out three marks which we might reasonably expect to be found in a revelation coming from God to men. The second of these was, that we should expect a revelation to contain knowledge or guidance which could not be attained by unaided human effort. There does not seem a sufficient reason why the great source of all truth should directly unveil to us what we are able to learn by making use of the ordinary faculties with which we have been endowed. We are possessed of reason and conscience by which, as a general rule, we may discover the facts and laws which are needful for our guidance through the present life. By the former power—the power of reason—we can ascertain many of the laws which govern the universe in which we live; we can find out those truths which constitute the different sciences; and we can, within certain limits and with a reasonable degree of accuracy, trace backwards the history of our race and of the world. By the latter—the power of conscience—we can determine what should be the great principles of right



that should govern our lives ; it is an inward monitor whose office it is to point out right and to approve of our doing it, to indicate wrong and to condemn us for following it. Now, we might I think lay it down as a principle that by revelation there should not be expected any unnecessary interference with the operations of our reason and conscience, and that these should be our guides except where they are inadequate. As examples of things which by our own effort we are unable to accomplish, I may mention the following: we cannot of ourselves truly know God, His nature and relations to us ; we cannot of ourselves discover the origin of this present universe ; we cannot of ourselves free ourselves from the power of sin and its accompanying wretchedness ; we cannot of ourselves penetrate into the dark world beyond the grave and see or determine what will be our future destiny. We might reasonably expect therefore that, if a revelation is given to us at all, it should concern such mysterious and important subjects as these.

§ 42. In reference to this subject I wish to point out a distinction of some importance. You are aware that the phenomena of the human mind are now divided into three great classes: the intellectual acts; the feelings and emotions; and the voluntary activities. And when we speak of revelation in its general sense, we mean any divine communication or influence

which either gives knowledge to the intellect, or purifies and stimulates the emotions, or guides the will. Thus revelation, if it is given, might be intended not merely to communicate knowledge which we could not ourselves discover, but also to excite in us new emotions which would not naturally arise, and to guide us in our practical lives in cases where reason and conscience would fail. Thus revelation is a divine communication of knowledge or emotion or practical guidance which without such communication we could not possess or enjoy.

§ 43. I have hitherto spoken of revelation in the singular as a generic term applicable to all cases in which any revelation is given. But I wish you to bear in mind that a revelation is a particular communication of knowledge, emotion, or guidance passing from the Divine Being to some particular human mind. If at any time any human being has received from God any communication of truth or love or wisdom, that is to him a revelation. It is absolutely essential to the character of a revelation that it should be made to some particular mind. Consequently you will see that by revelation I do not mean a book in which revelations are recorded; I make this remark because I have frequently heard Christians charged with the absurdity of holding what is called a book-revelation. Further I distinguish between revelations made to

people for their own private guidance, or revelations referring to particular nations or countries, and revelations intended to be of world-wide applicability. The majority of Christians believe that their lives are under the care of God's special providence, that their ways are under the control of an all-wise and all-good Father who will make all things work together for their good. And there may be special revelations of God made to particular persons having reference to particular places; as for example, when Abraham was informed of the doom which awaited the wicked cities of the plain on which is supposed now to rest the waters of the Dead Sea. But again there may be revelations which have a reference to the welfare of all mankind; and it is plainly ~~with~~ these universally-important revelations, if such have been made, that we are now concerned. In our further consideration of the subject, we shall pass by what may be called private and special revelations, and direct our attention to alleged revelations which have a manifest bearing upon the welfare of the human race as a whole. It is plain that any universally-important revelations demand a careful and critical examination, while, with reference to alleged special revelations having no reference to mankind as a whole, it is of comparatively little importance to us to determine whether they are true revelations or not. There may

be many things in the sacred books of different peoples which are firmly believed by them to be revelations, but unless these are manifestly of universal importance, it is of no consequence to me whether they are true or false, genuine revelations or the result only of the human imagination. While, on the other hand, if there is a series of alleged revelations which have a manifest and important bearing upon the whole of the human race, it is of immense importance for each individual to examine into their character and claims.

§ 44. This brings me to the consideration of the third characteristic which I said might be expected in a revelation or series of revelations concerning the validity of which it should be important for us to enquire. Such revelation should be accompanied by such circumstances or evidences as to enable reasonable minds to satisfy themselves as to whether it is genuine or not. Although it may be quite true that by the natural use of our reason we are unable to discover the mysteries of the divine nature and kingdom, yet it is also true that our reason is the only power that is given to us by which we can understand things which are revealed. The light of reason and conscience is the light by which we must see everything which is made known to us; and therefore we should expect a revelation to be presen-

ted to us in such a way that by reason and conscience we should be able to judge whether it is a true revelation or not. It is not sufficient for us merely to receive the statement of some one who believes that a revelation has been made to him, unless his statement is supported by corroborating facts or circumstances of such a nature as to satisfy reasonable minds that his statement is correct. Of course it is not to be expected that everything contained in a revelation should be perfectly intelligible to our minds because there may be things in the divine world which are beyond the power of our reason to comprehend; and it may not be necessary for the purpose which the Divine Being has in view in making the revelation that we should understand everything about it. We should suppose that the design of any revelation would not be to satisfy our speculative curiosity regarding divine things, but to furnish us with the means of getting free from the evils and imperfections with which we are now surrounded; this at least appears to the present writer to be the most important end that could be accomplished for our good. And this end does not appear to require as its condition perfect knowledge; indeed from the present limitations of our faculties, perfect knowledge of divine things appears to be not only unattainable by us but incommunicable to us. But still notwith-

standing all this, we ought to expect that any true revelation would be accompanied by such corroborating circumstances as to give to a reasonable mind sufficient grounds for confidence in receiving it as a revelation. ' .

§ 45. If you ask me what corroborating circumstances would be sufficient to satisfy a reasonable mind that any alleged revelation is a true one, I should feel much hesitation in giving you an answer *a priori*. The safest reply will be to present you with the corroborating circumstances which satisfy my mind as to the genuineness and truth of a revelation which I wish to offer for your acceptance; and this I shall do in subsequent letters. In the mean time allow me to point out briefly the stand-point which we have now reached. We believe in the existence of one God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, who is not to be identified with His universe nor yet separated from it; who is not a logical abstraction but a living intelligent Power. We are incapable of directly knowing God, since our powers of knowledge are relative only to phenomenal things, and the natural exercise of these powers regarding the unseen things of God cannot be relied upon as giving us truth. It may be possible, however, for God to reveal Himself and His will to us, as far as it is possible or desirable that such a revelation should be

made; and when we consider the sin, the imperfection and the wretchedness of our state, it does seem of the highest importance, although perhaps not to be expected, that some means should be provided for freeing us from these things. If it be alleged by any person that they have received revelations from God, and these are offered for our acceptance, we have a right to ask—are these alleged revelations of any importance for the benefit of the human race? Are they merely of local and temporary interest, or are they of world-wide and never-ending importance? Are they of such a nature that we could of ourselves attain to them, or are they undiscoverable by human reason or unattainable by human effort? Are they offered to us merely upon the authority of some person or some body of men unsupported by any reasonable evidence, or are they of such a nature in themselves and attended or followed by such circumstances that a reasonable mind has an opportunity of examining their claims and satisfying himself as to their genuineness and truth?

I trust that you will carefully think over the ground which we have now reached to ascertain whether you thoroughly agree with me as far as I have gone. If you do agree with me, you have advanced beyond the stand-point of simple Theism and acknowledge its inadequacy to satisfy human wants. Theism is based

upon the assumption that human reason and effort are sufficient for our enlightenment and salvation; the necessity of Revelation is founded upon the fact that human reason and effort are not sufficient for our enlightenment and salvation. I have examined the characteristics of such a Revelation as would be worthy of our examination and acceptance if shown to be worthy of confidence; and I shall proceed to lay before you the only Revelation with which I am acquainted, that is manifestly intended for a most important end, of world-wide and never-ending importance, and supported by such corroborating facts and circumstances as to make it worthy of the confidence of all reasonable minds. This will be the subject of future letters.

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## LETTER IX.

### THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

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§ 46. I desire in the present letter to indicate to you in a general way what is included and implied in "the Christian Revelation," leaving the details of its contents to be filled up in subsequent letters. And my first remark is, that this term is applied in a general or collective sense to indicate a great number—a long series—of particular revelations made to particular persons during a period of many centuries. At a very early period in human recorded history, Abraham, a native of Chaldæa and a Shemite by race, received a "call" to go to a distant land and establish there a nation. From time to time his immediate descendants were reminded of their covenant with Jehovah, and ultimately under Moses, the Hebrew people were led out towards the promised land. Jehovah was regarded as the Ruler of this people, and He governed them for many years by means of judges, and afterwards by means of kings. A series of prophets appeared amongst them who professed to declare to the people the divine will, and warned them against the idolatry and sin which abounded around them; a priestly office was also established to conduct the

religious worship of the people. For a while the nation prospered, but calamity finally came upon them, and they were from time to time conquered and carried away to distant Babylon. In the period of their captivity, their religious feelings and longings were kept alive by the medium of prophets of wonderful power and spiritual life; they looked back with deep penitence to the sacred land and temple of their fathers; and they were taught to look forward to some future more glorious day when an Anointed Saviour should come and establish a kingdom of peace in the world. This Messianic idea grew and strengthened amongst them till it formed the chief element in their religious lives; and by some of their prophets the time and circumstances of his appearing were indicated so clearly, that no intelligent reader of these prophets could doubt what and whom they referred to. At length Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a village of Judæa, and sages from Persia as well as pious people amongst the Jews, under what they believed divine guidance, recognised in the child, the Saviour of mankind. For a period of about thirty years he passed through an ordinary human life, growing "in stature and wisdom and in favour with God and man." At the end of this time, in the prime of his life, he was publicly and solemnly introduced to his public mission by baptism, and for about three years

he continued throughout Palestine teaching in a unique manner, and exhibiting wonderful powers over nature, the human spirit, and human life. During this time he frequently told his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem and die, and that he would rise again from the grave; and he spoke of his approaching death in such a way as to shew that he considered it a necessary part of his mission, that it was a voluntary and deliberate act of his own rather than a calamity inflicted upon him by his enemies. When he was crucified, his disciples fled for fear and thought that all hope was now gone; but upon the third morning they were astonished to hear from some women who belonged to their company that their crucified Master had appeared alive. Time after time the disciples were visited by the risen Jesus; and at last, before his final departure from the visible world, they received his commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creatures. Acting upon this commission the apostles preached first in Jerusalem and afterwards in the surrounding countries. About seven years after his death, a young Hebrew, afterwards called Paul, when engaged in persecuting the Christians, had a vision of Jesus speaking to him, and was led to become one of the most devoted and successful of his apostles. This Paul wrote letters to the churches which he founded, and some of these letters

are the earliest records which we have of Christ's work. Others of the apostles also wrote letters or histories regarding the life and work and kingdom of Christ, and these writings have come down to us and are the only authentic record which we have of the final acts and completed form of the Christian Revelation.

§ 47. I have given to you in a very brief form an account of the most important outlines of that long series of events which we call the Christian Revelation. I told you before, that the term revelation is properly applied to a single communication of divine truth, or emotion, or guidance given to some particular mind. But here it is applied to a long series of such particular revelations given to a great many different minds at long-recurring intervals of time. This application of the term is justified by the unity and harmony which are found amongst the different members of this long series; a careful study of them shews that they are connected together by a unity of character and design which is very remarkable. The most important of the revelations which preceded the historical appearance of Jesus pointed out to a future time when the Messiah should appear; and his appearance and work were so prominently brought forward in them, that no one could doubt but his coming was their chief subject. When he came he was acknow-

ledged by both enemies and friends to be the most wonderful man of his time ; even the virulent hatred of his persecutors was a testimony to his greatness. After his work was finished there can be no doubt but he was the source and centre of the revelations which followed, and he was universally recognised as the head and foundation of the church which his apostles established. Thus there is a very remarkable unity amongst this long series of revelations since they all gather themselves around one Person, who is their subject. And for this reason we cannot judge of the genuineness or truthfulness of any one of them apart from the rest ; we must examine them all as constituting one grand whole.

§ 48. Another important characteristic of this series of Revelations is, that although given to particular persons, the most of whom belonged to the Jewish nation, they are manifestly of world-wide importance. The chief promise made to Abraham was,—“ In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.” And notwithstanding all the exclusiveness of the later Jews, it was from time to time manifestly the utterances of the prophets, that the object of the Jewish separation should be attained only when the Gentiles should be admitted to the future kingdom of peace and righteousness. When Jesus himself appeared, it was one of his chief objects to overthrow the

exclusiveness of the Jewish sects; and his apostles afterwards had revealed to them the mystery "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise by the gospel."\* And after the destruction of Jerusalem, the members of the infant Christian church, being dispersed throughout the Mediterranean world, carried the offers of the gospel to all tribes and nations without distinction. Thus when we consider the applicability of this revelation, we see that it fulfils one of the conditions which I before referred to of a revelation being worthy of our careful examination; it professes to bear upon the best interests not of a race or nation but of man as man. I say the *best* interests, because the blessings which this revelation lays open before our minds are of the very highest kind. It professes to hold forth the means whereby may be obtained salvation from sin and misery and a spiritual life which will be eternal. Its main object is to bring to the knowledge of mankind a Person who is the way, the truth, and the life; who is the Agent by whom man is to be reconciled and united to God. It opens up also, the way to a glorious immortality, clothing with brightness and joy that

future life. which, without the light of the gospel, is shrouded in gloom and full of uncertainty. Now I am not at present concerned with the question whether these offers of this revelation are actually realised by those who accept it; what I wish now to point out is, that this revelation promises blessings to mankind of *universal* interest and of *supreme* importance. It therefore alleges itself to be of such a nature as to be worthy of every one's careful examination; and I can ask you with confidence and with earnestness to go on and satisfy your own minds as to whether it is a true revelation of divine facts or not.

§ 49. You have now a right to ask me whether the Christian revelation is furnished with any marks or characteristics by which we may judge whether it is a divine revelation or a mere human production. I now desire to satisfy you upon this point. I have already shown you that the Christian revelation consists of a long series of particular revelations, extending over many centuries, these revelations professing from first to last to be, not of special and local interest but of universal and supreme importance. I have also shown you that these revelations, although many and various, are all centred about one Person, who gives unity to them all. These characteristics are I think *prima facie* indications of a divine origin. We know that in early times nations and tribes were sepa-



rated from one another by strong feelings of jealousy and tribal exclusiveness. And, so early as the time of Abraham, we have no evidence that there existed amongst men that feeling of the unity and universal brotherhood of mankind, which the promise made to Abraham appears to imply. The revelation which he received,—that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed—involved an idea which at that time could not have been naturally conceived; and this idea of universal human brotherhood continued to appear from time to time amongst the Hebrew prophets until it received its fullest expression in the life of the Son of Man. It would appear then a likely thing that Abraham truly received the promise that his seed should be a blessing to universal mankind from Him who loved mankind and wished to confer upon them the promised blessing. But still further the fact that in the Christian revelation there are included a long series of particular revelations uttered by particular persons, some of whom were separated from one another by many centuries, affords us the means of forming a reasonable opinion regarding it. These persons living so far from one another in point of time, there could be no collusion between them, and if their different revelations are characterised by unity and harmony, this could not arise from any design upon their part. The unity and harmony of

the Christian revelation appear to be most reasonably accounted for by the unity of the Spirit who communicated the revelations to the different seers. Thus if we take the Christian revelation as a whole, we observe these important marks by which we may form a reasonable opinion regarding its character and origin:—it is of universal applicability and recognises the universal brotherhood of the race; and the different parts or special revelations of which it is composed are characterised by an internal unity and harmony which seem inconsistent with the supposition that they were the result of merely human effort. These are statements which I now make to you without attempting to justify them; their justification must be effected by a closer examination of the revelations in detail.

§ 50. With reference to the special revelations which are given to particular persons there are various ways in which we may form an opinion about them. Many of these revelations were *predictions* of particular events connected with the Jewish nation or the neighbouring cities or countries; the accurate fulfilment of these predictions is their verification. Many of the predictions refer, sometimes vaguely, sometimes precisely, to the future coming of the Messiah, or the future history of the Christian church; the fulfilment of these predictions enables us to form a reasonable opi-

nion as to whether they were of divine origin. Many of the revelations uttered by the Jewish prophets were notes of warning to the Jews to avoid the sins by which they were tempted, or into which they had fallen ; the truthfulness of these may be determined by their agreement with the general principles of divine government which we may learn from a careful examination of history. Many of the revelations uttered by prophets and apostles were expressions of what we may call divine facts or events ;—facts connected with the divine nature and existence, actions performed by divine Persons, divine purposes promised to be carried out, the character of the heavenly world and of spiritual beings : such revelations as these cannot be directly verified as they refer to things unknown, but those through whom they are made, may be possessed of such a character or such powers that we feel constrained to place confidence in what they say ; and further their special revelations may so harmonize and fit into what we may call the general scheme of the Christian revelation as a whole as to afford a reasonable ground for believing them. Many of the revelations have reference to man's state after death, and the manner in which the human soul may be saved from sin and may achieve immortal life ; our confidence in these revelations also must depend partly upon the character and powers of those who make

them, partly upon the fitness of the means to accomplish the end—human salvation, partly upon the completeness with which these revelations satisfy the deepest human wants and yearnings. These tests which may be applied to the special revelations of the great Christian series, and perhaps others besides these which may occur to your own minds will I trust be employed by you seriously and faithfully as a means of making up your minds regarding their truth.

§ 51. The most important test for determining the genuineness and truth of the Christian revelation I leave to the last. This test is—human experience of the actual effects which follow from the acceptance of the Christian faith. These effects may be studied in two forms. We have first the external effects produced in the lives of individuals, in the character and customs of nations, and in the history of the world. You, my friends are able to judge of these effects. You may look at the external lives of Christians although I am sorry to be compelled to confess that Christians do not always live according to their profession. But you may find some Christians, I should say multitudes, if you only had the opportunity of knowing them, whose lives have been completely and most beneficially changed by becoming true Christians. And in the way of changing and ameliorating the condition of mankind I think I may say with con-

fidence that Christianity, even although mixed with many errors and professed often in a most unchristian spirit, has produced enormous results, and done more than anything else to influence modern human history. In the second place, there are the internal effects of which individual Christians are conscious in themselves. And there can be no doubt that the effects of which Christians are aware in their own hearts are, to them, the strongest kind of evidence of the divine origin of the Christian revelation. But unless you who read these letters are in heart Christians, you will not be able to make use of or appreciate this kind of evidence. He whose heart has been enlivened and transformed by the love of Christ, who has felt and grieved over the power of sin within him, and by Divine grace has been led to Jesus as a Saviour, who has had a new spiritual life enkindled within him, and feels that his life is hid with Christ in God, and who is able to look forward with hope to an immortality of happiness after death, such a one I say has a kind of evidence which the world cannot appreciate. In fact there is nothing which will make a man thoroughly a Christian—a believer in the Divine character and origin of the Christian revelation—except experiences such as these. Intellectual evidences such as those to which I before referred are not sufficient to make a Christian believer; it is only he who feels,

the moral and spiritual power of Christ's life and spirit, that is prepared to receive in faith the contents of the Christian revelation. I wish therefore to impress upon you that a merely intellectual examination of this revelation will not lead you to a true conclusion ; there must first be created within the human heart a certain moral and spiritual sympathy with Christ before the divine facts and mysteries of the Christian revelation can be received with true and living faith.

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## LETTER X.

### THE PROPHETIC PREPARATION.

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§. 52. I wish to turn your attention in the present letter to a very wonderful series of writings—the records of prophetic utterances—which are scattered here and there throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. This subject is so extensive that I do not profess to do more than merely give you some leading features of it, so that you can judge for yourselves of its importance, and perhaps may be led to study it in greater detail than the present letter will enable you to do. You are aware that amongst the Hebrew people, there was an order of religious teachers called prophets, whose principal functions were, to teach the people regarding their religious duties, to warn them against the sins into which they were falling, to comfort and guide them in the time of national calamity, and to keep before their minds the future coming of that wonderful Person known to them as the Messiah. Many of these prophecies, although of importance for particular times and peoples, and for the establishment of the pure worship of Jehovah, are in other respects of only local and special interest. To such we shall not refer. Those to which I desire



to turn your attention may, I think, be classified under three heads: (1) prophecies intended to elevate and purify the moral and spiritual life of the people; (2) prophecies having an indistinct reference to some future period of peace and righteousness, giving rise to and embodying what is called the Messianic idea; (3) definite predictions of the coming of the Messiah.

§ 53. Many of the Psalms of David may be placed under the first of these classes. Although called psalms, and therefore intended to be sung or chanted, they are in character prophetic utterances, and were no doubt of great influence in sustaining and guiding the religious life of the people. A few specimens will illustrate to you their general character. In the fifteenth psalm, David says:—

“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”

The continual rehearsal of words such as these in the ears of the people, must have had a powerful effect

in elevating their moral standard, and keeping before their minds the character of a citizen of the kingdom of God. Again in the twenty-third psalm, we have an expression, unparalleled in its beauty, of the loving confidence which the child of God can, at all times, place in his Heavenly Father.

“The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul ; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for ever.”

For a joyful expression of gratitude to God, for all the benefits and blessings which He confers on man, we turn to the one hundred and third psalm.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; and healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies ; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things ; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The

Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide ; neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins ; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."

Expressions of religious emotions such as these, and they might be almost indefinitely multiplied, must surely have had a very powerful influence in moulding the religious life of the people and fitting them as a nation for a much more spiritual form of worship than was then established amongst them.

§ 54. If now we listen to the utterances of some of the great prophets of Israel, we shall see what an important part they must have played in purifying and guiding the moral principles and religious thoughts of the nation.

"The vision of Isaiâh the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken : I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters ; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward." (Isaiâh i. 1-4.)

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying :—Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word and say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever.” (Jer. vii. 1-7.)

These are but specimens of what abounds throughout all the prophetic writings:—stern and solemn warnings addressed to the people to turn them from their sins; threatenings denounced against them for persistence in evil; promises held out to induce them to return to their Father; sublime messages from God designed to purify their lives, and elevate them to a higher moral and spiritual level.

§ 55. Now let us examine some of those prophetic utterances in which the Messianic idea is more or less distinctly observable. “Behold,” says Isaiah:

“Behold, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall

*bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall be not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."* (Isai. xlii. 1-4.)

Here the prophet appears to refer to some servant of God who was to appear, full of humility and kindness, but powerful in establishing righteousness and truth, and whose work was to be of benefit not merely to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. The prophet Joel writes :

"And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and the handmaids in these days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." (Joel ii. 26-32.)

In these words, Joel appears to refer not merely to a period of unusual religious revival, but also to some terrible judgment which was to follow it. Again, Zechariah says :

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” (Zech. xii. 9, 10.)

In these and many more passages to which I might refer, the prophets of Israel appear to have had more or less distinctly before their minds visions of a future time when the people were to be restored to their own land, when a mighty teacher should arise amongst them, who, however, should not at first be received, and when a spirit of truth and righteousness and faith should be poured out upon men. Doubtless the national trials of the Jewish people, their numerous captivities, their persecutions, the desolation that so often swept over their beloved country had a good deal to do with the development of the Messianic idea. They were easily led to look forward to a more glorious future when they should be restored to their own land, and, when a king—the offspring of David—should reign in righteousness. And as they hung their harps upon the willows in distant Babylon and refused to sing the songs of Zion for the amusement of their conquerors, it would be very congenial to their

minds and hearts to think of their own doubtful and yet hopeful future, and to trust that Jehovah in whom their fathers had confidence, would keep His covenant to them and their children, and in some way fulfil His promise that in the seed of Abraham all nations of the earth should be blessed.

§ 56. But I now wish to call your attention to one or two precise and definite predictions of the coming of the Messiah. The most important of these predictions were made by Daniel, a Jewish prophet who lived in Babylon in the sixth century before Christ. I shall quote from his writings a revelation which was made to him regarding the future course of human history ; it is found in his seventh chapter.

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed : then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings : I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it : and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and, lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four

wings of a fowl ; the beast had also four heads ; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly ; and it had great iron teeth : it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it : and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it ; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots : and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

“ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool : his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him : thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him : the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake : I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away : yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.



“ I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass ; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet ; and of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell ; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them ; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High ; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise : and another shall rise after them ; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws : and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the

kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

§ 57. By comparing this vision and interpretation with others which Daniel saw, there can be no doubt as to the symbolical meaning of the beasts. The lion represents the Babylonian empire which was then but little past the height of its glory, and in the time of which Daniel began to exercise his prophetic office; the bear, strong but slow, symbolizes the Medo-Persian power; the leopard with wings, quick, vigilant and active represents with great appropriateness the empire founded by Alexander; and the dreadful beast with great iron teeth and ten horns is a suitable symbol of the vast and powerful Roman empire which, after the irruption of the northern barbarians, was divided into many kingdoms represented by the ten horns. And amongst all these great human movements and revolutions—

“One, like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed.”

With reference to this remarkable revelation, we

may observe two things:—(1) Daniel describes with an accuracy and appropriateness quite sufficient to enable us to identify them, four great kingdoms, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman, although during his life only two of them existed; the Grecian and Roman empires were still in the future. And this revelation of the four empires is given to Daniel in other visions in such a variety of forms that there appears to be no reasonable ground to doubt that it is a true revelation; no other empires than these could be referred to, and Daniel could not have conceived such accurately fulfilled visions by his own ordinary human intelligence. (2) The principal subject of these visions appears to be the wonderful kingdom given to one like the Son of man, which should be an everlasting kingdom, and into which people from all nations and kingdoms and tongues should be admitted. This kingdom is described in such terms as to be clearly distinguishable from ordinary human kingdoms. It is “a stone cut out without hands” indicating its indestructible character and super-human origin. It is ‘under the control and in the possession of “one like the Son of man”† who is called also the “Prince of princes”.‡ And this Prince of princes appears to be the central figure of all Daniel’s revelations, one of which is so remarkable and

Dan. ii. 39

† Dan. vii. 13.

‡ Dan. viii. 25.

so definite that I shall ask your attention to it particularly.

§ 58. In Daniel's ninth chapter he is represented as praying earnestly to God for his people, and an angel of God is sent to reveal to him the time of the coming of the Messiah. "Seventy weeks," he says—

"Are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the Sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the over-spreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."\*

In interpreting this prophecy, I may inform you, that a usage had been established amongst the Jewish prophets of speaking of one year as a day; and as seventy weeks are equal to four hundred and ninety

\* Dan. ix. 24-27.

days, this prophecy points forward to four hundred and ninety years "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." But we observe that this whole period of 70 weeks representing 490 years is divided into three portions:—7 weeks or 49 years; 62 weeks or 434 years; and 1 week or 7 years. The first two of these periods are to be completed before the appearance of the Messiah the Prince, amounting together to 483 years; and in the midst of the last period of seven years "the sacrifice and the oblation" are to be caused to cease. Let us see now how these numbers apply to actual historical events. In the year B. C. 457 Artaxerxes Longimanus issued a commission to Ezra, a Jewish scribe, to lead back a company of his own people to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding and restoring that sacred city; this appears to be the most natural point from which to begin the prophetic period. If we count onwards 483 years from B. C. 457 we reach A. D. 26; and as we know that the vulgar era of the birth of Christ is 4 years too late, and as Luke informs us,\* that at Christ's baptism he was about 30 years of age, we conclude that this point of time A. D. 26 coincides exactly with the public baptism of Christ or his public appearance in the character of the Messiah. About three years afterwards, or in the

middle of the last week of years he was "cut off, but not for himself;" and in his death, the great sacrifice was offered which should render all other sacrifices and oblations useless. Now if you consider that these points of him were made known to Daniel between five and six hundred years before the birth of Christ, and that they are accompanied by other visions, very full and complete, of the future history of the most important part of the world, and that they point indisputably to a strange kingdom that should be established without hands, by means of an Anointed Prince who should be cut off, but not for himself, when you consider that these things, so far removed from what any ordinary human intelligence could of itself conceive, find their complete fulfilment in future history, you must surely admit that they were true revelations.\*

§ 59. There are many other parts of the prophetic preparation for Christ to which I should like to refer you, were it not that I wish to make these letters brief, and only suggestive of a course of thought and study which, I trust, many of you will follow up for yourselves. I close this letter with a few general reflections. A remarkable characteristic of the great and varied body of Jewish prophecy is its unity of character and spirit. Prophets living hundreds of years

\* See Pusey's Lectures on Daniel for a full discussion of this subject.

apart speak in the same tone, and are occupied substantially with the same great work; while they are engaged with giving instructions or warnings regarding the present, there appears to spring up before their minds more or less brightly the vision of a future more glorious time when some wonderful Person shall appear and establish a kingdom of peace and righteousness. Some of them appear to have caught only very dim and vague glimpses of the coming glory; to others it appeared bright and clearly defined, and accompanied by circumstantial details which rendered its application indubitable; to Daniel notes of time were given with such minuteness that about the time when Christ came, a very general expectation existed, not merely amongst the Jews but also among surrounding nations, of the arrival of some wonderful Person. Now it appears to me that this long course of prophetic preparation bears the character of a true revelation; things were made known which could not have been conceived independently by the ordinary human intellect; it is especially inconceivable that so many human minds at such distant times could agree in their Messianic utterances so completely as they did, unless they spoke under the influence of one common spirit of prophecy. If then we admit these prophecies to be truly a divine revelation, we are led to ask why such a revelation was given, or what worthy object could

be accomplished by it? By *revelation* here I mean of course the prophecies bearing upon the future coming of the Messiah, that part of the whole Christian revelation which I have called the prophetic preparation. In answer to this question I think that we can see two important objects to be accomplished by this preparatory revelation. The first is, that the minds of men were prepared by it for recognising and receiving Christ when he came. The second is closely connected with this, that the minds of all men of all future times should have furnished to them important marks by which they can judge of the divine origin of the Christian revelation. The prophets of the ancient days were taught to prophecy about the future Saviour in order that when He came the world might have reasonable grounds for believing that He came truly from God. When we observe that so many seers independently of one another all turned their gaze towards the approach of some future wonderful Person, that many of them spoke of His character and the time of His coming so definitely and distinctly, that there can now be no reasonable doubt as to whom they referred, that all of them professed to receive their knowledge of this future Person and kingdom not from their own investigations but from a divine source, and that all of them appeared to see with greater or less clearness the transcendent and universal impor-



*tance of the work of Him whose coming they foretold, we have surely a combination of circumstances which could not be brought together by merely human foresight and co-operation, we have surely marks sufficient at least to urge us to go on with interest and earnestness to the study of the life and work of Him whom Jewish prophets predicted and Eastern sages went to visit at His birth.*

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## LETTER XI.

### JESUS OF NAZARETH.

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§ 60. In this letter I desire to pass in review before you some of the leading events and characteristics of him whose name I have written above. I take for granted that we have in the four gospels an honest and substantially correct account of the life of Jesus. I do not ask you to believe anything regarding the inspiration of the writers, or the impossibility of their writing what was incorrect. Simply consider that the writers of the gospels were honest men, who had good opportunities of observing or hearing about what they wrote, and that they were sufficiently intelligent to form reasonable opinions about what they saw and heard; I think I may reasonably ask you to do this; more I do not ask. Two apostles, Matthew and John, and two companions of the apostles, Mark and Luke, have transmitted to us more or less complete records of the public life of Christ. But before these gospels were written, epistles from some of the apostles, especially Paul, were written to particular Christian churches. The earliest of these epistles was written

by Paul to the Thessalonian church about the year A. D. 52, or about twenty-two years after the death of Jesus. At various intervals afterwards, Paul wrote other letters to other Christian churches all about things connected with the Christian religion. In the course of time, the want of a written record of the life of Jesus was felt, and various such records were accordingly provided, chief among which were the first three of our gospels by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. About the end of the first century, John, who lived the longest of all the apostles, and who was the most intimate disciple of Christ, carried out the idea of giving a life of Jesus which should supplement what was wanting in the others. In this last of the gospels, we have a more connected chronological arrangement, fuller accounts of discourses, and a greater manifest attention to the giving accurately of minute details than in the first three. The letters, of Paul take for granted and in some cases explicitly refer to or state the most important events of the life of Jesus, from which fact, we may reasonably conclude that the main circumstances of his life were commonly known and accepted amongst the people to whom Paul wrote long before the gospels were penned. I think therefore that I may safely affirm that we have abundant historical materials of indubitable trustworthiness from which we may gather.

such events and circumstances connected with the life of Jesus as will satisfy our minds in seeking to understand it.

§ 61. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea and spent his boyhood and youth in Nazareth of Galilee under the care of his parents. When about thirty years of age, a remarkable preacher appeared in Palestine assuming the garb of the ancient prophets of Israel, and reminding those who thronged about him of the great prophet Elijah. To hear his preaching, Jesus, along with multitudes of others, went; but when John saw the young man from Nazareth, he saw in him something more than other people saw, he pointed him out as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Jesus was baptized and from that time forth began to collect disciples and assume the position of a great and independent religious teacher. Several times he went with his disciples through the villages of Galilee and also of the neighbouring provinces of Samaria and Judea, crossing over sometimes to the east of the Jordan, and on that side extending his journey as far north as Cæsarea Philippi. At least four times during his public career he travelled south to Jerusalem at the season of the Passover or some other great Jewish feast; and from this fact we learn that his public life, must have lasted at least three years. During all these journeys he

assumed and performed the functions of a religious teacher, a healer of diseases, a ruler of the powers of nature and the spirit world, and a reformer of the great abuses which had crept into Judaism and were sanctioned by the Jewish leaders. In consequence of this last feature of his public life, he incurred the bitter resentment of the chief priests and elders, who resolved at all hazards to put him to death. Frequently he had told his disciples that an essential part of his work was to die, and when the time drew near he deliberately went down to Jerusalem to lay down his life. After a mock trial before the Jewish council and the Roman governor, instituted chiefly for the purpose of inducing the latter to consent to his death, he was taken outside of the city walls on the evening of the Passover feast to be crucified. There, between two thieves, he died with the triumphant cry upon his lips "It is finished." All his disciples, disappointed with the apparent failure of their master's attempt, and deeply disheartened by their own forlorn condition among their bitterest enemies, forsook the place and fled away to hide their shame as best they might. The body of Jesus was taken away to a new tomb; and as the Jews had heard it reported that Jesus would rise again, a band of Roman soldiers was stationed to watch the place. On the morning of the first day of the week, the third

morning after his crucifixion, according to Jewish reckoning, some women of the disciples' company went to see the tomb. Jesus had arisen; and he appeared to them; and they fled to tell the joyful news to the disciples; and over and over again he appeared to the disciples and explained to them more fully the mysteries of his kingdom; and then he departed to the heavens, leaving them the commission "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."\*

§ 62. Having sketched with great brevity the leading events of the public ministry of Christ, I wish now to turn your attention to some of its characteristic features. And perhaps the most striking of these features is, the *super-human* character which Jesus assumed. Although he usually called himself the *Son of man*, thus apparently identifying himself with human life and human interests, yet everywhere throughout his public life there were continually bursting forth indications of a consciousness that He was not a mere man. In the face of the stormy waves of Gennesareth he could say with calm dignity "Peace, be still." Raving demoniacs, obedient to a

\* In this and other accounts collected from the Scriptures the writer does not give references, partly because the necessary references would be inconveniently numerous, and partly because he wishes the readers to search for themselves.

word from his mouth, sat down quietly at his feet in their right mind. To the cripple or the paralytic, he would say; "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." To Lazarus who had been four days in the tomb near Bethany, he spoke with a word of power, "Lazarus, come forth." His *moral* acts were just as super-human in their character. "Thy sins be forgiven thee" was a usual sentence of his to the penitent sinners who appeared before him. Nor was the tone of his teaching inconsistent with the super-human character of his actions. "He spoke with authority and not as the scribes" who were mere expounders of the Mosaic law and traditions of the elders. He did not hesitate to place himself in a higher position than any of the great teachers who had gone before him. Nay he professed to have such a direct communication with God as had never been claimed before, and to be as he called himself "the Light of the world." Unlike all ordinary human beings, he had no consciousness of sin; not a word can be found amongst all his recorded sayings which conveys the shadow of a suspicion that in his mind there ever appeared the idea of his own personal sinfulness. But with the idea of sin amongst the men and women around him, he showed manifest signs of an intimate and painful familiarity. These features of his life will I think satisfy you that he claimed a super-human character; no

ordinary man ever acts or speaks in these ways, or makes such claims as these; nay still further, I think I may challenge you to point out a single great religious teacher in the whole history of the world who ever combined the features pointed out in this paragraph.

§ 63. But perhaps some of you are now thinking that the very super-human character of the features of the life of Jesus makes it incredible; you cannot believe these things because nothing like them have ever occurred in your own experience. And further perhaps you are thinking that you have been led to disbelieve the accounts of the miraculous things said to have been performed by the gods and heroes of your own national mythology, and you do not see why you should accept similar accounts related of a man who lived long ago in Palestine. With reference to the latter difficulty, I would remind you that the miraculous legends of mythology are not at all upon the same footing with the super-human character of Jesus. None of the mythological deities of the Hindus or Greeks or Romans professed to be Saviours of the world or givers of eternal life to men. It is not therefore of any very general importance to enquire whether the alleged events of their lives are historical or not. No person's spiritual interests will be affected in the slightest degree by disbelieving in



the labours of Hercules, or the amours of Jupiter, or the egg of Brahma, or the adventures of Rama or Krishna. It does not appear to make the slightest difference to us in the present day whether such things as these are true or false, credible or incredible. But the records of the life of Jesus come down to us with the claim to be of the most momentous and universal importance with reference to human salvation from sin and eternal life and happiness. We cannot therefore reasonably treat them as we would very properly treat ordinary mythological legends. With reference to the former difficulty that historical human experience shows no parallel to the super-human features of the life of Jesus, it would certainly be a difficulty if Jesus had claimed no other position than that of an ordinary religious teacher. We would very properly reject as unhistorical such records as we have of the life of Jesus were they narrated regarding any person who professed to be nothing more than a man, albeit a great man. The combination of super-human powers with an ordinary human character and position would be so incongruous that we would not readily believe it. But when we consider the *claims* of Jesus to a super-human origin and functions, it does not seem unreasonable that he should speak and act in a super-human way. He who said that he was the Light of the world and the Saviour of

mankind might surely be expected to do things quite inconsistent with ordinary human experience. Remember, I do not now assume that the position which he claimed for himself was true ; I simply assert that if we, for a moment, allow him the super-human character and position which he claimed for himself, it is quite reasonable, nay it is to be expected, that he should speak and act in a super-human way.

§ 64. But perhaps there are some of you who take another position and maintain that the super-human actions, or what are called the miracles of Christ, are *impossible*, in consequence of their being violations of universal and immutable laws. You may see this objection repeated over and over again in many modern books, and therefore it is right that I should say a few words about it. This doctrine of the impossibility of a miracle has a two-fold foundation. It is founded upon a certain conception of God's relations to the world, and also a certain conception of the character of law. It is assumed that God does not directly produce or interfere with any of the actions or events of nature or of human life, and that if God exists at all, He has left the universe and all things in it to take care of themselves. I leave you to judge for yourselves of the value of this assumption. If you believe it, you would better not read any more of my letters, as I am taking it for

granted that God does exist, and that He has not deserted His own universe, and that He continues still to exercise a fatherly care over the beings whom He has brought into existence. The very idea of the Christian revelation which we are now studying implies that God interferes with the ordinary course of human knowledge and gives rise to mental phenomena which would not arise of themselves, and this, if it be a fact, is a case of miraculous agency. And if this is possible, I can see no reason whatever for saying that God either cannot or does not produce phenomena in the material or vital world which would not naturally arise. But further, I said that this objection is based upon a certain conception of law. It is assumed that laws are universally binding and immutable, and that these laws cannot therefore be broken. In considering this assumption, allow me to remind you of the nature of what we call laws. They are purely *mental products*, the result of human thought applied to the study of phenomena. There are many such mental products. All general names, such as horse, tree, fire, and so on are the results of comparing similar *objects*, observing their resemblances, and in consequence giving them a common name. Formerly it was supposed that such general ideas as these had an actual existence in nature, but now everybody has come to the conclusion that they are

mere ideas in our minds and nothing more. In the same way a *law* is the result of observing similar *events*, tracing the resemblances of these events, and expressing these uniformities in a proposition; as for example, when we say, *all men die and continue dead*. But it appears perfectly manifest that this also is only a mental product, an idea which we have generalized from our experience, as all laws are; and to assert the impossibility of this law being violated is simply to assert that no event can happen different from the experiences from which the law has been generalized. And this assertion would be about as reasonable as for the inhabitants of Central Africa to assert that water could never assume a solid form, or for the inhabitants of India to declare that the existence of a black swan is inconceivable. All laws are generalizations from particular experiences and extend with certainty no farther than the experiences from which they are derived; if we extend them farther, such extension is based only upon a probability, and may at any time be rendered invalid by the arising of some inconsistent experience. Thus the doctrine of the impossibility of a miracle is inconsistent not only with the idea of the Christian revelation, but also with the scientific principles which lie at the foundation of our construction of laws. The only rational ground upon which it can be asserted that miracles are im-

possible is, that God either does not exist or has left the universe to itself. And I trust that you have agreed with me long ago to abandon both of these positions.

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## LETTER XII.

### THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS.

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§ 65. In my last letter I pointed out to you some of the leading events of the life of Jesus, and indicated their generally super-human character. The super-human features of his life, although not to be expected in any ordinary man, were, I told you, quite credible and reasonable when considered as belonging to one who professed to be the Saviour of mankind. It might be expected that such a one would signalize his mission in such a way as to call the attention of men to it; and the fact that Jesus showed his power over nature, healed diseases, and forgave sins, overcame the power of evil spirits and raised the dead to life again, served to confirm his claim to be a divine Saviour. Such actions as these appear to follow naturally from his assumed character and give us strong reasons to believe that what he said about himself was true. Still further all these actions were of a nature consistent with his assumed character. The healing of physical disease was very appropriate in one who professed to be the great physician of souls; the casting out of evil spirits harmo-

nized with the character of one whose work it was to overcome the influence of the prince of evil ; the feeding of thousands with bread was a fitting symbol for the giver of divine nourishment to the human soul to make use of ; the raising of the dead to life was an action very suitable in one who professed to give to men spiritual and eternal life. Thus the super-human facts of the life of Jesus, admitted to be credible and possible, and especially the particular character of *these facts, appear to harmonize wonderfully well with the mission upon which he professed to have come ;* and this harmony of the alleged mission and the features of the life of Jesus is one of the marks by which reasonable minds may convince themselves that his allegations were true. I wish in this letter to point out another feature of the mental life of Jesus which also harmonizes with his claims and affords a very striking mark by which we may satisfy ourselves as to their truth, and that is his sinlessness.

§ 66. By using the term *sinlessness* I do not at first wish to assume that Jesus was really sinless ; I wish only to indicate that in the mind of Jesus, as far as we can see, there never arose the idea of his own personal sinfulness. Upon one occasion, when engaged in controversy with some Jews, Jesus asked " Which of you convinceth me of sin ? " (John viii. 46.) We have several prayers which he uttered to his

Father, but in none of them have we any trace of a feeling of imperfection or sinfulness. In all his teachings to his disciples and others, he appears to assume a higher moral level than his hearers,—“ he taught with authority.” As far as I am aware there is not a single word or event of his life on record from which we could conclude that the consciousness of his own sinfulness ever arose in his mind. This is a mental characteristic very extraordinary and full of meaning. There are some very low and primitive tribes of the human race in whose minds the idea of sin appears scarcely or not at all to have arisen. These tribes are so low and degraded that the very simplest religious ideas seem to be wanting, and it is with great difficulty that any religious truth can be introduced into their minds. But no one would place the want of a consciousness of sin found amongst these people alongside of the mental characteristic of Jesus which we are considering. Instead of being at the bottom of the moral scale, he is at the top of it. The fact of his unconsciousness of sin will appear all the more extraordinary from considering some other circumstances.

§ 67. The first of these is, that he had a most delicate perception of sin in the minds and lives of other people. The leaders of the Jews were continually being reprov'd by him for their hypocrisy,



their injustice, and their unfaithfulness. He clearly distinguished between the *conventional* crimes, the *ceremonial* guilt which was punished so severely by the Jewish leaders, and the true moral guilt which they allowed to escape, but which was sin in the sight of God. He frequently brought conviction of sin to hearts from which it had been almost absent. Allow me to refer you to the case of one who came asking "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Math. xix. 16 ff.). After some conversation Jesus tells him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." The young man "went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." He was a worshipper of his wealth and could not sacrifice that for the sake of eternal life. Jesus applied a test to him which revealed his weakness and convinced him that he was not perfect in the sight of God. I might point out many instances in which Jesus showed a keen perception of sin and a discrimination between conventional faults and true moral guilt, and in which he brought conviction to the hearts of others—instances so many and so striking as to make it seem most extraordinary that the idea of his own sin should never cross his mind. It was not from the want of acquaintance with the general idea of sin; nor was it from the want

of knowledge of particular cases of sin, that he was unconscious of any sin in himself. With sin he was most intimately acquainted, and he professed that it was his aim to conquer sin ; but yet he could ask his enemies with the triumphant tone of conscious sinlessness “ Which of you convinceth *me* of sin ?”

§ 68. Another circumstance which renders this unconsciousness of sin more remarkable is, the intimacy of the communion which Jesus held with God. As far as we are able to follow his life, he appears to have been a man of unusual devotional habits. We read of him sometimes going to mountain tops at night alone and continuing all night in prayer to his Father. The *spirit* of his whole public life was a spirit of devotion and apparently complete submission of his will to his Father's. Just before his sufferings, when the dark gloom of these sufferings was beginning to overshadow his human spirit, he asked, “ What shall I say—Father, save me from this hour ? But for this cause came I to this hour. Father glorify thy name.” He could not pray to his Father to save him from the hour and power of darkness, because in doing so, he would be seeking to shun the very work which he came to perform. And so in complete and trustful submission, he gives up all thoughts of self and seeks only that the name of his Father may be glorified. And generally in his prayers we can ob-

serve a tone of intimacy and affectionate confidence which is not to be seen elsewhere. He evidently does not speak to his Father as from a distance, he does not speak, like ordinary mortals, as if there were a wide gulf separating him from God. On the contrary in his prayers there appears to be always implied, what he himself tells us really existed, an intimate spiritual union between him and his Father. "I and my Father are one," he said to the Jews. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" he asked of Philip, one of his disciples. And indeed his discourses and prayers teem with indications that his sense of nearness to God and intimate union with his Heavenly Father was wonderfully strong, quite peculiar ~~in~~ fact, as compared with the religious sense of other men.

§ 69. Now what I wish to point out is, that his unconsciousness of sin is all the more extraordinary when taken in connection with the fact that he held such intimate communion with the Father. Amongst ordinary men it is always found that the upspringing of the religious sense, the arising of a true devotional spirit always intensifies the feeling of our imperfections and sins. In fact a true conviction of sin appears to arise in the heart only when men begin to realize the fact that they have a God and Father whose holy laws they have broken. And the more

clearly men see their relations to God the more clearly are they able to perceive their own imperfections. The history of the Christian church is full of instances of men who have passed through terrible mental struggles on account of the felt presence of sin—struggles which sprung up in their hearts when, and only when they began to feel strongly the presence of a holy God. In fact, it would appear necessary, from the nature of the case, that where two spiritual beings are brought into conscious communion—the one all holy and pure, the other sinful and impure—it would appear necessary, that the sinfulness of the latter should be clearly brought to his consciousness by being brought into contrast with the holiness of the former. Given that a man is sinful, the consciousness of his sinfulness can arise only when he looks at himself in the light of a holier being; and on the other hand, the felt presence of a higher and holier being must necessarily have the effect of revealing his own sinfulness. This appears to be a law of our moral nature just as firmly established within us as any other mental or moral law which can be pointed out. And yet when we examine the mind of Jesus, we see that it does not hold. The most intimate communion with his Father appears to have revealed to his mind no shadow of the idea of his own personal sinfulness. How are we to account for this spiritual phenomenon

so inconsistent with what obtains universally amongst the human race ?

§ 70. Allow me to re-state the problem. Given that two beings, the one of whom is perfectly holy and good and pure, come into conscious spiritual communion with one another ; if the other be imperfect and sinful, the felt presence of the holy being must give rise to a consciousness of sin ; but if the felt presence of the holy being give rise to no consciousness of sin, can we avoid the conclusion that the other being is not sinful ? For my part I see no other conclusion possible, and if you admit my premises I do not see how you can draw any other. It may indeed be difficult for us to conceive or understand a man who, in the presence of the Holy One, is perfectly unconscious of sin and perfectly sinless ; but the history of the life of Jesus testifies to the former and our reasoning has led us to the latter as a fact. Allow me to ask you to reflect seriously upon this remarkable fact. We could scarcely believe it in any ordinary case, in fact we have never been called upon to believe it in any other instance of a human life. No other human life has ever been presented to us in which there was any pretence to a perfect unconsciousness of sin in the felt presence of the Holy God. But when we consider the *claim* which Jesus made, the *character* and *function* which

he assumed, his sinlessness ceases to be extraordinary, and in fact quite harmonizes with his claim and assumed character. As an ordinary man, we could not believe his sinlessness; as the Son of God and the Saviour of man, we could not believe in him but for his sinlessness. Thus his claim to be a divine Saviour appears to be strongly confirmed by the remarkable spiritual phenomenon which we have been considering; he who professed to save men from sin and give them new spiritual life, must needs be free from sin himself and possessed of life in himself; he who professed to have come from God, the Eternal Son, must needs show, in order to be believed, that he is possessed truly of a divine nature, that he is free from the taint of human sin. This Jesus did and therefore we can believe his claims. In that extraordinary spiritual phenomenon which we have studied, he has presented to men of all ages and places a mark by which they can reasonably judge whether what he said of himself was really true or not. And when we take this spiritual characteristic of his nature along with the super-human powers which he exerted, and consider that they corroborate one another in supporting his assumed character and functions, we must surely be led at least to go on, with sympathy to the examination of what he did for human salvation and what he taught regarding the kingdom of his Father.



## · LETTER XIII.

### THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS.

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§ 71. I wish in the present letter to bring to your notice certain characteristics of the sufferings of Jesus, and, prominent amongst these, their voluntariness. Immediately after Peter, apparently for the first time confessed that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God, (Mat. xvi) “ Jesus from that time forth began to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day.” And the nearer that the time drew on when the great consummation of his life was to take place, the more frequent and distinct appear to have been his declarations that it was necessary for him to die. To the Pharisees with whom he so frequently disputed, he said, “ Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me and shall not find me; and where I am thither ye cannot come.” (John viii 33, And again.) “ When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself. (John viii 28.) And in that



beautiful parable in which he calls himself the good shepherd, he repeatedly insists upon the fact that his sufferings, and death were perfectly voluntary and deliberate. "I am," he says, "the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John x.) And again, shortly before his death, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." (John xii 27.) Thus, while feeling a natural trouble in his human soul at the near pros-

pect of death, he felt and expressed quite strongly and distinctly that the coming hour of suffering and conflict was a necessary part of the work, which he came into the world to accomplish. For the very cause of meeting death he had come unto the hour of death; and in perfect submission of will he was able to pray "Father, glorify thy name."

§ 72. I wish first to point out the very peculiar, the unique character which these voluntary sufferings gave to Christ's life. Undoubtedly there have been multitudes who have voluntarily passed through great sufferings for the sake of other people. The soldier who goes to fight the battles of his country knows very well that sufferings and probably death are before him, and yet he does not shrink from the disagreeable prospect. Every father and mother know what it is to suffer to a greater or less extent for the benefit of the children whom God has given to them; and many children have lived to bear a burden of pious suffering on behalf of their aged parents. We have read of friends who have been so strongly bound to one another by confidence and affection, that the one would be willing to endure a great deal of pain and sorrow provided the other could be freed from them; and Paul tells us, "that for a good man some would even dare to die." In fact the conditions of human welfare are such that a great deal of suffering

must be voluntarily undergone by some people for others. Society does not consist of a great number of independent individuals who may each follow their own selfish and separate courses; society consists of members bound together by various ties into great and united bodies; and hence no one suffers merely for himself and by himself, but the general rule is, that people are called upon to suffer for one another.

§ 73. Notwithstanding all this, we must still place Christ in quite a unique position in consequence of the character of his sufferings and their voluntariness. It is not that he suffered more than any other person has ever suffered; we are scarcely able to compare his with other people's sufferings with reference to their intensity; although the fact that he was unconscious of personal sin, and yet was brought intimately into contact with sin, would seem to add an element of pain quite absent in the case of other sufferers. But it is that he appeared to look upon his sufferings and death and resurrection as being an essential if not the most essential part of the work which he had to do. During the greater part of his public career he, from time to time, told his disciples that he must needs go to Jerusalem and there lay down his life; and the work of his life could not be completed until he had laid it down. And moreover there did not appear to be any manifest particular cause why he should thus

suffer. No visible enemy of his country or of his friends appeared whom he must needs go and conquer. It did not appear manifest even to his most intimate disciples that his sufferings and death could be of any service to them, or could free them from any sufferings which might be threatening them. Now if we look at the sufferings of men in general, we are always able to assign some special cause for them. A soldier suffers in conquering the enemies of his country. Parents and children and friends suffer for the special welfare of those with whom they are specially connected. But there appeared no special cause and no special connections to give rise to the necessity of Christ's voluntarily suffering. Thus in his case a series of sufferings were represented by him as an absolute necessity to the accomplishment of the work which his Father had given him to do, and these sufferings did not appear to be assignable to any of those special causes to which as a general rule we are able to trace human sorrow.

§ 74. Still further observe that the death of Christ was represented by him as a deliberate *act* of his own, instead of being an event in which he was a *passive* sufferer. As a general rule, death comes upon men in opposition to their desire, and they submit to it with passive resignation as something that they cannot help. But Christ in describing the decease which he

should accomplish, says, "I lay down my life: I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." He represented his approaching death as a victory which he was about to gain over the prince of this world; and in the supreme moment of his life he burst out with the triumphant cry—"It is finished," and bowed his head in death. Now if we consider together this combination of remarkable circumstances, I think you will agree with me that no sufferings of any man of whom we have any record are anything like these. Sufferings, people generally try to avoid, if possible, as an evil; Christ from the beginning deliberately went on towards the end which he saw to be so shrouded in pain and sorrow. Sufferings, in the case of ordinary men, are the result of special causes, or arise in special relations and are voluntarily endured by men in reference to these special causes and relations; in the case of Christ, his sufferings no doubt had a cause and an object, but in explaining these, he indicates that the cause and object of his sufferings were something far different from those of ordinary sufferings. Death, as a general rule, is an event in which men are *passive* and in which human power is *conquered*; but the death of Christ was an *act* which he accomplished, and in which he appeared to be the *victor* instead of the *vanquished*. Not only do these circumstances distinguish Christ from ordi-

nary human sufferers, but also from all the great men who have appeared as the founders of creeds or the religious leaders of men. No other founder of a religious faith has ever thought it necessary to do what Christ did—to lay down his human life in order that a divine life might be attainable by man. It is an invidious and ungracious thing to be always comparing the character of Christ's life and of his moral instructions with those of the founders of other faiths for the purpose of demonstrating the inferiority of the latter. And little good is to be accomplished by pointing out the moral imperfections of the founders of any of the great religious faiths as compared with Christ. But in this matter of Christ's sufferings, their voluntariness, their necessity, and their peculiar character, we are not able to *compare* them with anything belonging to any other religious leader of whom we have any record. No one before or since ever thought it to be the great work of his life to die. No one before or since ever laid down his life with that long contemplated and voluntary deliberation which we have observed in Christ. Where men have died they have submitted to an evil which they could not avoid, and they have been regarded as vanquished by the power of an enemy; but Christ advanced to his death as a soldier marches to a conflict in which he is confident of victory. Thus, in the voluntariness

and other peculiarities of Christ's sufferings, we have a feature of his life which separates it from every other life, and makes it impossible for us, to institute a comparison, in this respect, between it and any other.

§ 75. Let us now see if we can make out any thing satisfactory regarding the significance of this remarkable feature in the life of Jesus. Hundreds of years before this, in the most definite prophecy on record of the coming of the Messiah, Daniel foretold that in the middle of the last week of his prophetic period, the Messiah should be cut off but not for himself, thus indicating so long before the time, that the death of Christ should be for the benefit of others. And Christ himself, in all his references to his coming decease, either expressly states or implies that what he was about to suffer was not upon his own account. "I lay down my life," he said, "*for the sheep.*" "The Son of man must be lifted up, and if he be lifted up *he will draw all men unto him.*" Everywhere it appears to be taken for granted that the sufferings of Christ were, in some way, to benefit others. The name which Christ so frequently applied to himself—the Son of man—indicates that he had intimately united himself to our human nature, and appears to imply that the most essential and important act of his life—his death—should be for the benefit of that humanity with

which he had made himself one. And, when we consider the claims which he made regarding himself and his work: that, he had come from the Father with a commission to execute; that he had come to the world with a message of love and mercy; that he had come to open up a way by which men might come to the Father; and when, along with these things we take the fact that his commission could be accomplished only by his death, we seem to have some light thrown upon the meaning of his death. Apparently his mission could not be intended for any one nation in particular. The Jews expected that their Messiah would come specially for their benefit and again establish their nation in prosperity around the successor of their great king David. But not a word that Christ ever uttered gives us reason to believe that he ever entertained such a limited notion of the extent of his commission. Called as he was by himself the Son of man, he identified himself with the human race, and in his last command to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to all creatures", he indicates the world-wide applicability of the results of his death. Wherever now a *man* is to be found, his followers are authorized to declare that Christ died for him.

§ 76: Still further it would appear that the death of Christ was not intended to secure for man any par-



ticular temporal benefits or to ward off any particular temporal evils. The sufferings of ordinary people are designed for such ends as these. The soldier suffers and dies in order to establish peace and prosperity in his country; the philanthropist spends his efforts to ameliorate the condition of some particular sufferers or to remove from particular places certain particular evils; relatives and friends suffer in order to secure prosperity to, or ward off misfortune from those with whom they are connected. But it was not for any special reasons such as these, that Christ said he must die; in fact, we could not understand how his death could produce such special benefits as these. His followers were not to expect peace and prosperity—at least of a temporal kind—he told them; on the contrary they were to look out for strife and persecution and poverty and the hatred of the world. They were to be humble in their desires after earthly things; they were not to seek after the objects of earthly ambition—riches, power and honour—as amongst men; for Christ told them that his kingdom was not of this world, that it was to be established *here* in the heart of man, and *hereafter* in the spirit world. It was not then to remove any of the special evils to which flesh is heir that Christ died, nor to secure any of the special benefits after which men seek. This appears everywhere from Christ's repre-

sentations; it appears also from a consideration of the nature of the case. The Son of man died for universal humanity; we would therefore expect that the cause for which he suffered should be of universal interest. And when we examine his sayings in regard to his life's work and his kingdom, we are not long left in doubt as to the object he had in view.


§ 77. There are two series of terms constantly made use of by him which indicate clearly the ruling idea that appears always to have been before his mind. These terms are: on the one hand, sin, evil, darkness, debt, condemnation, death; and on the other, righteousness, good, light, forgiveness, approval, life. Against the former he appeared to consider it his life's work to wage a war of extermination. Whether we consider his instructions, or his miraculous works, or the general tenor of his life, it appears incapable of doubt that he considered it his one duty to contend against sin and the other evil things of the first series, and to save men from them. He cured diseases; and said to those cured, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go and sin no more." He cast out evil spirits from men, thus indicating his mission to fight against the prince of evil. He gave sight to the blind, thus symbolizing his opposition to the darkness which brooded over the human intellect and the human spirit. He raised the dead

to life again, thus showing that it was his mission to conquer the great and universal enemy of man. He proclaimed himself the light of the world, one who was able to give light to the human heart, such light as would lead men to the great source of light. He called himself the bread of life, of which if any man should eat he would never again hunger. By an almost infinite variety of symbol and parable, he held himself forth as one who had come to conquer the great enemies of men—sin and death,—and put men in the way of obtaining the blessed counterparts of these—holiness and life. And it was with reference to these objects that he was to lay down his life. Strange it seems that he who professed to come for the very purpose of conquering sin and death must needs, in accomplishing his purpose, submit to death. Strange that he who declared himself to be the Lord of life should find it necessary to submit to death before he could give life to his people. And yet this apparent anomaly was expressly stated by Christ to be a fact. It was by passing through the hour of suffering and death that his Father was to be glorified. It was in this supreme act of his mission that the prince of this world and the great enemy of man was to be cast out. And at the moment when the work of death upon his body was completed, Christ's triumphant cry "It is finished" indicated that he regarded

his conquest of death as also completed. Thus in Christ, the anomaly of one submitting to death and at the same time triumphing over death, was realized.

§ 78. But although this appears to be anomalous, we are able to see in it something which commends itself to our reason and conscience. You are all willing to admit that a state of sin and death is the condition of man. Sin is a wilful and selfish separation from God and disobedience of His holy law; death is the result or penalty of this, and death spiritual as well as physical is as wide as humanity. The work of the Son of man was to save men from sin and death, and give them holiness and life; and it appears reasonable that in attempting this, he should, in our human nature, pass through all the consequences that sin had wrought in us, that he should, as our representative suffer what man has had to suffer in consequence of his separation from God; and that he should, in his person, victoriously carry our humanity through the dark shadow of death to a life that is beyond. It appears reasonable that if, in our human nature, the Son of man should be able to meet our dark enemy, and suffer all that he could inflict, and yet retain his life and his relationship of Sonship to God,—it appears reasonable that he should be able to save us also from death and give to us also a life over which death should have no power. But you

will readily see that, from this point of view, the death of Christ was not the completion of his work. If Christ conquered death in our nature, it appears to be necessarily implied that he emerged from the conflict with a life which death could not touch ; if he did not thus emerge from that conflict, it was death that conquered him, not he that conquered death. And as he suffered the result and penalty of sin as our representative, and for the purpose of giving to us a life which would never die, it seems necessary, for the purpose of affording a ground for human belief, that his attainment of a new and higher life should be achieved in our nature, and in such a way as to become known to us. Hence, Christ must not only die ; he must needs ~~also~~ rise again, according to his own prediction. Thus the death of Christ is only one side of the great and most essential act of that great work of human salvation which he undertook ; the other side of it—his resurrection—appears equally important, equally necessary. But this is a subject too extensive to be followed out in the present letter, and I shall therefore leave it for my next.



LETTER XIV.  
THE RISEN SAVIOUR.

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§ 79. In my last letter I pointed out to you that the death of Christ was only one side of the all important act which crowned his work of human salvation; the other side of this act was his resurrection. If his work was to save men from the power of death and give them a life which could never die, he must himself, in our nature, achieve that undying life, he must victoriously carry our human nature away from the bondage of the tomb and, with that nature still upon him, enter into spiritual life with the Father. If, I say, this was the work which he came into the world to do, either he rose from the dead, or he failed in accomplishing his commission. To show that this was the work which he considered himself to be entrusted with, I can appeal to almost every page of the gospel history. Sin and darkness and death were the enemies whom he came to vanquish; righteousness and life he promised to give to those who should unite themselves by faith to him. To bring wandering sinners back into living union with the Father was the object set before him. There can be no doubt

then as to the general nature of the work which he professed to do, although perhaps we may fail to realize fully or to express accurately its conditions and its mode. In order to accomplish this work he united himself to our nature and proposed to pass through all that sin and death had wrought or could work upon our corrupted nature. It was love that sent him upon this mission—the infinite love of the Father—who takes no pleasure in the death of man, but desires to give them life and immortality. And what I wish now to point out to you is, that this work of divine love undertaken by Jesus could not be completed in his death, since its prime object was to give life. This necessity of his resurrection is not an idea which has sprung up subsequent to his time; it is an idea involved in the representation which he himself so often gave of the nature of his work. The question now is, Did the resurrection actually take place? Did Jesus succeed in finishing his work, or was his mission a failure?

§ 80. The *earliest written record* which we have of the resurrection of Christ is contained in Paul's first epistle to the Christian Church in Corinth. This epistle was written in the year A. D. 57, that is, 27 years after the death of Christ and 20 years after Paul's conversion to Christianity. The record I refer to, is the first eight verses of the fifteenth chapter, and

I shall quote it in full. "Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once: of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." These words of Paul are, as I said, the earliest written account which we have of the resurrection of Christ; and from them we learn with absolute certainty (for no one doubts that this epistle was actually written by Paul) that all the apostles believed and preached that Christ arose from the dead. They believed that he rose from the dead because they saw him with their own eyes, they spoke to him and heard him speaking; they preached his resurrection because they now considered his resurrection to be an essential part of the gospel with which they were commissioned to go to the world. The facts of



Christ's work which Paul considered most essential were "that Christ died, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day," and there can be no doubt whatever but all the apostles agreed with Paul in holding forth these facts as constituting essentially the human side of Christ's work. Some time after the writing of this letter of Paul, we do not know exactly how long, other written records of the resurrection of Christ made their appearance—those which we have in the four gospels. The accounts which we have in these gospels are more detailed than that which Paul recorded in his epistle to the church of Corinth, giving many circumstances connected with his different appearances. It is not easy from them to frame a connected narrative of his appearances, as there are things in them somewhat difficult to be reconciled. This is not to be wondered at, when we consider that the gospels were written a long time after the events occurred, and were written by different persons who probably were not equally familiar with all the events they related. But leaving a few minor differences of detail out of account, all the writers agree with Paul in asserting as matters of well-known fact that on the third day after Christ's death he arose from the dead and appeared, upon several different occasions, to his disciples, holding converse with them, and that some time afterwards

he ascended out of their sight towards the heavens. There cannot be the shadow of a doubt that all the apostles believed these things and publicly preached them.

§ 81. Now the question arises, were the apostles trustworthy witnesses? That they were honest and sincere there cannot be any doubt; no body of men would have entered upon a course involving such sufferings and persecutions as their's, unless they really believed what they preached. Were they then imposed upon by their own excited imaginations? You are aware of the fact that sometimes people in a state of high mental excitement fancy that they see things which are really optical illusions, and the testimony of the apostles has been objected to upon this ground. But bear in mind that after Christ died, the apostles *did not expect* his resurrection; they were disappointed and hopeless; their minds were therefore not prepared by an excited expectation, at least at first, to see the risen Saviour. And when it was announced to them by women belonging to their company that Jesus had risen from the grave, they did not believe, until their own eyes were satisfied by seeing himself. Further, spectral illusions appeal to *one sense only*, that of sight; whereas in the recorded appearances of Christ at least three senses were appealed to—sight, hearing, and touch—thus enabling the apostles to verify the

testimony of one sense by the others. Moreover an optical illusion cannot continue long, since in a healthy person, a subjective excitement of the retina of the eye never continues long; but the interviews between the risen Saviour and the apostles appear to have frequently been long-continued. Still further a remarkable change took place in the demeanour and bearing of the disciples, which cannot be accounted for by a mere illusion. Before and immediately after his death they were hopeless and timid to a degree; as soon as they believed in the risen Saviour they became confident and fearless. This change in their demeanour was a real and permanent change which could not be produced by a passing illusion of a heated brain. Sceptics in modern times have complained that they have not an opportunity of cross-questioning the witnesses as in a court of law for the purpose of eliciting the truth. Of course they have not; but they have an opportunity of cross-questioning the circumstances which are recorded in the histories for the purpose of ascertaining whether there is not a substantial agreement amongst all the things which have any bearing upon the point at issue. And I now ask you carefully to examine all the circumstances bearing upon the question of Christ's resurrection for the purpose of satisfying your own minds about it.

§ 82. The united and harmonious testimony of the apostles to the resurrection of Christ is strongly corroborated by the silence of his enemies. While the apostles,—a weak and persecuted body—preached the risen Saviour, the powerful Jews and Romans could have found no more effectual means of overthrowing the new heresy, as they called it, than to deny or disprove the resurrection. This they could easily have done if the resurrection did not actually take place. They had the body in the tomb sealed with the seal of the Roman empire, guarded by a band of Roman soldiers; all precautions were taken by powerful enemies, to prevent the new sect from rising into power. The simple production of the body by the Jews or Romans, or even any reasonable attempt to invalidate the assertions of the apostles would have for ever blasted the prospects of the Christians. But nothing of this kind was ever done. The only attempt at it was a wretchedly improbable story put into the mouths of the Roman sentinels to the effect, that while they slept at night, the disciples came and stole away the body of Jesus; as if Roman soldiers would for any bribe go to their commanders and report that they slept at their post, and thus bring upon themselves the punishment of death.\* This complete silence of the enemies of Christ and their failure

\* Matt. xxviii. 12-15.

to refute the apostles' assertions, which they could easily have done if they were false, and which it was certainly for their interest to do, affords the strongest confirmation of the truth of the apostles' testimony. It is just as valuable as the sharpest cross-questioning could have been, because it shows that the greatest enemies of Christ, who were no doubt just as shrewd in worldly matters as modern barristers, and who were interested in denying his resurrection, were unable either to deny or refute the fact which Paul and the other apostles preached, that Jesus whom Pilate and the Jews crucified had indeed risen again from the grave.

§ 83. I wish now to point out to you some peculiarities in the manner of Christ's appearances after his death. If you read the various accounts of them, you will observe that he had undergone a great change since his death. Sometimes those to whom he showed himself did not recognise him at first, until some familiar word or action showed them who he was. He appeared, suddenly in the midst of his disciples, although the doors were shut; and he disappeared from their sight with equal suddenness. He was possessed of a body which could become visible and tangible as well as invisible and intangible. Whatever was the nature of this body, it was manifestly different and subject to different laws and condi-

tions from that with which he went to be crucified. And yet he was manifestly the same person who had died upon the cross. He took pains to convince his disciples that he was still the same Master and Saviour who had broken bread with them in the upper chamber the night before his crucifixion, and that the continuity of his human life had not been broken. Although evidently not hampered by the same material grossness as before his death, he was still the same. The same, yet how much altered, how much more free from the binding restraints of earth, how much more endowed with super-human powers, how much more glorious! Such must have been the thoughts of the disciples regarding their risen Saviour, and Paul has explained his ideas about the resurrection-body, not only of Christ but of all Christians. In the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthian church in the forty-second and following verses, he writes thus of the resurrection-body :—

“ It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a soul-body (or body of the animal life), it is raised a spirit-body (or body of the spiritual life). There is a soul-body, and there is a spirit-body. And so it is written : ‘ The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit.’ Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural (or of the

animal life) ; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy ; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy ; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

If you compare this explanation of Paul with the appearances of Christ after his resurrection, I think you cannot fail to observe how well the one fits in to the other and throws light upon the other. Christ arose with a spirit-body, not the coarse carnal body which is of the earth, and which we all carry with us up to our death, but a body suited to be the dwelling-place of the spirit which he possessed in common with his Father. What are the relations between the carnal soul-body which is of the earth, and the more ethereal body of the spirit with which Christ arose, how the one may be united with the other or separated from the other, we are not able to say. The revelation of Christ throws no light upon this subject, and the investigations of human science are perfectly powerless in the matter. But the all-important fact which Paul and the other apostles testified to remains independent of these difficulties—that Christ in our nature and in a spirit-body arose from the bonds of the tomb, entered upon a new life with the Father, and thus opened up the way by which men who have

The author has here taken the liberty of departing from the common translation and giving one more near to the original.

become possessed of his spiritual life may enter with him into a condition of life with the Father which will be eternal.

§ 83. I have now placed before you a sketch of what we know and believe regarding the risen Saviour, and have endeavoured to make plain not merely the facts which enter into the Christian's creed but also the manner in which these facts bear upon human salvation. Allow me briefly to recapitulate. Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, prophet after prophet amongst the Jewish people pointed out to some Coming One who should establish a kingdom of peace and righteousness in the world. By these prophecies not only the Jews but other surrounding nations formed the expectation that a wonderful man would appear, specially sent from heaven as a Saviour. Some of the prophecies were so definite that about the time of the birth of Christ, those who were careful observers of the time expected him. Jesus was born in Bethlehem amid circumstances of mingled humility and glory, and spent the time of his immaturity with his parents at Nazareth. His public career began at thirty with his baptism by one who came with the appearance and spirit and power of Elijah who was prophesied by Malachi as the forerunner of the Messiah.\* He

\* Mal. iii, 1.; iv, 5, 6. Mat. xi, 10, 11.



travelled through Palestine with a few chosen disciples, healing the sick, forgiving sins, feeding the hungry, instructing the ignorant, raising the dead to life, denouncing sin and hypocrisy in the strongest terms, and ever proclaiming *himself* the giver of life and the Saviour of man. Although perfectly unconscious of sin in himself, he declared that he must die for the sins of men and rise again for giving life to men. He did die and he did rise again, still human but more glorious than when he died. And he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creatures; and Paul tells us that the essential points of that gospel were *that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures*. Now observe that these simple facts *Christ died* and *was buried* and *rose again* are the facts upon which Christianity is built; they were the objects of prophetic predictions for hundreds of years before they occurred; and ever since their occurrence Christians have looked back to them as their only ground of comfort in death and of hope of a life with God which cannot die. These facts are indeed very simple, but when you consider *who* it was that thus died and rose again, and *why* it was that he died and rose again, they assume a grandeur and an importance which no other facts of the world's history can possibly possess. He who thus

died and rose again declared that he was the Son of God and had been with the Father from all eternity ; and he declared that the reason of his appearing in human form was that he might conquer sin and death, the great enemies of man, and give unto his people eternal life. And he sent forth his gospel into the world with the promise and the warning *that whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life, and whosoever believeth not shall suffer everlasting destruction.* And now my friends, you ask, Are these claims which Christ made regarding himself true ? And what are the evidences of their truth ? To these questions, I answer : I might arrange before you a long line of what are called Christian evidences, but I prefer to ask you to read and reflect for yourselves. Only one consideration I place before you : if Christ's claims regarding himself were not true he is, consciously or unconsciously, the greatest deceiver and imposter that the world has ever seen, because none other has ever made such claims as he. If you shrink with horror from this conclusion, as I think you must, can you avoid the alternative conclusion that He who has been the central object of prophetic vision and apostolic preaching and Christian faith is truly the Son of God and the Saviour of man ?

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## LETTER XV.

### THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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§ 84. Christ's last command to his disciples was, "Go ye into all the world and evangelize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." In obedience to this command, the apostles began to preach Christ, who died for man's sins and rose again for man's justification and life, as the only Saviour. First at Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity, afterwards in the surrounding districts and countries the joyful message of salvation was proclaimed. To many of the leading Jews the new gospel of Christ was a stumbling-block, because they were still fettered by the ceremonies of their Mosaic laws, and by the traditions handed down to them by their fathers. To many of the Greeks it appeared to be foolishness, because their minds were pre-occupied by that philosophy which had been thought out for them by those great men who by their wisdom and learning have made Greece for ever illustrious—the philosophers of the three or four centuries before Christ. But to multitudes of both

Jews and Greeks and Romans, the new gospel shewed itself to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation ; they felt themselves to be sinners and now saw how they might be freed from sin ; they were seeking after a life with God and saw in Christ how that life might be attained ; they had been groping after a knowledge of God in the dark, and believed that Christ came not only to reveal God, but also to reconcile wandering sinners to their Father in heaven. Multitudes, therefore, through the preaching of the apostles, believed in Christ, and were baptized in token of their allegiance to him ; those who had been Jews were excommunicated by their brethren, —it mattered not, because they now had something in their hearts more precious to them than the world could give. Those who had been Greeks and Romans were probably also persecuted, were certainly thought to be fools and haters of mankind ; it mattered not to them either, for they knew Him whom they believed, and were persuaded that His friendship and protection was more valuable than the friendship of the world. Thus the Christian church was formed ; men and women separated themselves from Judaism, and the Gentile forms of worship, and constituted themselves into a distinct body having Christ as their head. And in the course of a comparatively short time, the new Christian church, amidst many perse-

cutions and trials, extended itself over the greater part of the Roman empire.

§ 85. In this letter I wish to bring before you certain considerations regarding the Christian church, its position and importance in the world, and the obligations resting upon all believers in Christ to join themselves with it. I am aware that amongst the people of this country, it is frequently thought that it is not a matter of importance for a believer to connect himself with the church by baptism; that the true baptism of a Christian is internal and spiritual; that if he believes in Christ in his heart he will be saved whether he is baptized or not. Such ideas as these I have frequently met with; young men who were almost convinced to become Christians have put away their good intentions in this way; and I believe that there are many in India who are secretly Christians, but externally nothing. I dare say that the difficulties of making a public profession of Christianity in this country have a great influence in giving rise to and encouraging such ideas as these. I am aware that persons belonging to Hindu families, in connecting themselves with the Christian church by baptism, have to make great sacrifices and suffer great trials, have to give up father and mother, brothers and sisters, everything almost which we hold dear to us. This state of things excites the deep sympathy

of Christians towards those who have resolved thus to suffer for Christ, and it is scarcely to be wondered at that many of those who truly believe in Christ should seek to find some easier mode of acting according to their convictions than one which entails such great sacrifices. And my present letter is intended to show you that there is no easier mode of being faithful to Christ than that which He has prescribed.

§ 86. Let me first point out to you some of the necessary circumstances and conditions of the Christian church. Those who believe in Christ are not at once to be taken out of the world; they are to be kept in the world, but to be in some respects distinct from the world. The church of Christ is a great body having Christ as its Head, all the members drawing their life from the Master, and all of them being united to one another. The idea of each individual being saved for himself and by himself is not a Christian idea; Christ prayed that all his followers might be one, might be united together by a common life and common hopes, and sympathies. The Christian church is essentially a *society*, and it is through this society that the blessings which are intended for Christ's people are ordinarily dispensed. The Christian church in the world consists of men and women who believe in Christ, and, as the majority of Christians think, the children of believers also; and there

are two great aims held before this Christian church. The first of these is an internal aim,—the edification of the church itself, the building up, or confirming and strengthening of the members of the church in the faith which they profess, and the purging away of all evil. The second aim is external, having reference to the world; in this relation the members of the church are enjoined to do all that they can in the way of spreading abroad the knowledge of the gospel of Christ amongst people who do not possess it or who are indifferent to it. The Christian church is thus to be like a light shining in the midst of spiritual darkness, to exhibit to those who are living in darkness the blessed light of life. The idea of there being *isolated* Christians—Christians cut off, even externally, from the Great Head and from his body the Church, is quite inconsistent with the nature of that kingdom which Christ describes in so many beautiful parables and which he died to establish.

§ 87. But further, in this world, the Christian church is composed of human beings, having material bodies and surrounded by material circumstances; and therefore as long as Christians are in this world, they cannot separate themselves from their material conditions and attain to that pure spirituality of life which they hope for in a higher state. The church therefore must now be constituted to suit present



human conditions, and hence arises the necessity of the external forms which have been established. No human society, in our present state, could be held together, or could unitedly fulfil any useful purpose without external bonds of union and external symbols of the principles which they hold in common. The great Master who knew so well the nature of man whom he came to save, saw this, and consequently established two solemn external rites which should be not merely bonds of union amongst Christians, but also important means by which grace and spiritual nourishment should be communicated to Christians' hearts. The first of these is baptism, the initiatory rite, a rite which symbolizes spiritual purification, which symbolizes also a union with Christ in deadness to sin and in life with the Father. The second of these is the holy supper which Christ established on that night when he was betrayed, when he took bread and wine and gave them to his disciples in the manner and with the words expressed in a beautiful poetical paraphrase of the record of the event given by Matthew :—

My broken body thus I give  
For you, for all ; take, eat and live ;  
And oft the sacred rite renew,  
That brings my wondrous love to view.

\* *Matth.* xxvi. 26-29.

Then in his hands the cup he raised,  
And God anew he thanked and praised ;  
While kindness in his bosom glowed,  
And from his lips salvation flowed :

My blood I thus pour forth, he cries,  
To cleanse the soul in sin that lies ;  
In this the covenant is sealed,  
And Heaven's eternal grace revealed.

With love to man this cup is fraught,  
Let all partake the sacred draught ;  
Through latest ages let it pour,  
In memory of my dying hour.

§ 88. In addition to these sacred rites of the Christian church, other means have been established for the edification of Christians, and for accomplishing the objects of the church in its external relations. Prayer, or spiritual communion with God and Christ, is one of the most important of these. Christians are taught to ask from God for those blessings which they need, especially blessings of a spiritual kind. They may always pray with confidence for grace to assist them in opposing temptations and sins, and striving after a better and holier spirit and life, because they have the promise of the Master that the Holy Spirit will be sent to them. For temporal blessings and events they may also pray, but always with the condition "if it be thy will;" for in these

matters we do not know what is best for us, and should always be willing to entrust our ways to Him who doeth all things well. Another means of accomplishing the ends of the church is the careful study and explanation of that book, or rather series of books, in which the Christian revelation is contained. We must now become acquainted with the great events on which our Christian religion is based at second hand, through the written records of those who communicated them to future times. Consequently in the study of these records, there is the only available means of keeping up in the church that knowledge which is of so great importance to human salvation ; and in the holding up of these records and the things contained in them before the eyes of the outer world, the church has the principal means of extending that knowledge which is fitted to make men wise unto salvation. The gospel which Paul preached was " that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures ;" and this is the centre of the gospel message still. To preach this gospel and things connected with it is the great work of the Christian church in its external relations, so that men from the world may be led to flee from the sin and death in which they are living, and may lay hold upon that life and immortality which Christ offers to them.

§ 89. Now what I wish to point out to you is, that a man who, being a believer in Christ, declines to connect himself openly with the Christian church not only excludes himself from the most important Christian privileges, but also fails to perform the most important Christian duties. It is through the Christian society that the great blessings which Christ designs to give to his people are chiefly conveyed, and those who fail to connect themselves with that society necessarily fail to share those blessings. Christ is the vine; the members of his church are the branches whose life is supplied from the nourishing sap of the vine. The branches, being united with the vine, preserve their life and vigour; but separated from the vine they fall to the ground lifeless and useless. In this beautiful figure Christ has taught his people the vast importance of preserving their union with Him and his body, the church. And this union is important not merely for the individual growth of the members of the church, but also for the effectual performance of the church's duties to the outside world. The great duty of the church with reference to the world is to hold up before it the light of the gospel of Christ; and this duty can be performed only by those who are recognised as Christians. And you know very well that, in Hindu society, no person is recognised as a Christian who has not, by baptism,

joined himself to the body of Christ. You may believe in your heart, you may even speak in favour of Christ, you may declare your faith in him as a Saviour; but your relations and friends will not treat you as a Christian until you have in the usual way joined yourself to the church of Christ. In this matter, their view is quite correct; no one can be a partaker of the highest Christian privileges, or fulfil the most important Christian duties while cut off from that body of which Christ the Saviour is the head. And Christ has given us the awful warning “ *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s and of the holy angels.*”\*

§ 20. But perhaps some of you ask “ Can we not be saved, if we believe in Christ, without being baptized, and joining his church externally ?” My friends, that is a question which I do not feel myself authorized directly to answer. But for your guidance I shall point you to two verses of the fifteenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, namely, the thirteenth and fourteenth. The first of these is “ Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.” The Son of God was not ashamed or unwilling to give up the glory which he had with the

Father from all eternity, and to assume our sin-burdened and death-stricken human nature; he was not ashamed or unwilling to suffer and to die the degrading death of the cross for the sake of saving those whom he loved from destruction; and should they who have felt the blessedness of his love be ashamed or unwilling to suffer for Him who thus died for them! The second of these verses is "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Your friendship for the Master is to be tested by your willingly and cheerfully carrying out his wishes and commands. And his commands are not grievous or unreasonable; they are founded upon the utmost love and the highest wisdom. He desires his followers to have his life and his love in their hearts; and he prescribes to them the best way in which they may get it. By a union, both internal in the heart and external visible to the world, with him and his living body, life and faith and love are to be kept up and nourished in the individual members, and the light of the glorious gospel of Christ is to be held up before the world. Do any of you whom I now address wish to be considered and to be the friends of Him who loved you and gave His life for you? If you do, may He grant you wisdom and courage to carry out His commands, and to be faithful to Him.

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LETTER XVI.  
THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM.

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§ 91. One of the most important claims which Christ made regarding himself and which was made for him by his disciples was that he was the light of the world, that he came to manifest the things of God to men, that he was a revealer of things which could not be discovered by ordinary human investigation. It is impossible for you to read much of his history without seeing plainly that Christ's person and work are not merely intended for bringing about human salvation from sin, but they are also designed as a *revelation* of invisible things to the human mind. During his lifetime he frequently claimed that he taught with divine authority, that he made known to the world what he had seen with his Father. He intimated however to his disciples that there were many things connected with the invisible kingdom which they were not then prepared to receive. "I have yet," said he "many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but what-



soever he shall hear, that shall he speak ; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." (John xvi. 12-14). After his departure his disciples or rather his apostles claimed to speak in his name and to have had revealed to them *mysteries* hitherto unknown. Paul, for example, says (2 Cor. xii. 1-4) "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory : I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the body I cannot tell ; God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heavens. And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell : God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not possible for a man to utter." Although we do not know whether Paul in any of his letters communicated any of the things revealed to him on this occasion, yet there are many things which he writes to the churches that are distinctly of the nature of a revelation of things unseen. In proof of this allow me to refer you to the second chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians ; the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians ; the first chapter of his epistle to the Galatians from the eleventh verse ; the second chapter of his epistle to the Philippians from the fifth to the

eleventh verses ; and many other passages of his epistles. John also, the beloved apostle, claims to have seen visions and revelations of the Lord. The introduction of his "Revelation" runs thus : "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass ; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John ; who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

§ 92. Thus, although we must regard the most important feature of Christ's gospel as being its direct offer to men of the means of being saved from sin and death, yet there are also connected with it important revelations of invisible things. And these revelations are to be considered important because the followers of Christ are taught to look forward to an immortality of life in a universe at present invisible to them ; and it is surely of interest for them to know something about that invisible kingdom in which they hope to spend a future eternity. It is not my intention to try to present you with any thing like a complete view of what is made known in the Christian revelation about the spiritual world ; I wish merely to give you an outline sketch of some of the most important features and objects of the invisible world which are contained in this revelation. And I think

we may consider that revelations of the invisible kingdom are concerned chiefly about (1) Divine Persons and their functions, and (2) human beings and their future condition ; these at least are the subjects of the revelations in which we naturally feel the greatest interest. I ask therefore that you will give your attention to me while I indicate what appears to be more or less clearly made known to us in the Christian revelation regarding these things.

§ 93. The apostle John tells us that " No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John i. 18). And this declaration of John is consistent with what is written elsewhere regarding God. God in His own absolute nature is unknowable by human minds ; He can become known only by means of some revealer manifesting Him to us. This declaration is also quite consistent with the doctrines of the majority of scientific men and philosophers. By intellectual research in the universe we cannot discover God, unless we carry with us in our minds a belief in His existence. God, if he exist, cannot become known to us by the ordinary investigations of science ; He can only become known to us by revealing Himself to us. Now the Christian writings are full of declarations that the invisible unknowable Being has revealed Himself to men through.

His Son who was with Him from the beginning. And this eternal Son of God is represented not only as the manifester of Deity but also as the Agent by whom the universe itself has been brought into being. John says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John i. 3). And Paul says, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things and by him all things consist" (Col. i. 16-17). And again, "For to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things and we in him: and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him" (1 Cor. viii. 6). And these are but specimens of the teaching of the Christian Scriptures which in many parts assert or imply that the Eternal Being brought finite creatures into existence through the operation of His Son. In addition to these functions of the Son, you are now familiar with the doctrine that He is also the agent by whom the work of human salvation has been accomplished; the burden of the gospel is that He who created the worlds and manifested the invisible Being, took upon Him our human nature in order that He might carry it triumphantly through the con-

flict with death and confer upon it a life with God which should never die. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). And still further we are told that this incarnate Son of God is to be placed at the head of that human kingdom which he came to save from death. He is to be the Judge of the world and the Head of His church. Jesus himself said to the Jews, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." (John v. 22, 23.) And again after his resurrection he said to his disciples "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). And if you read over the epistles of Paul you will find in almost every page the headship of Christ over his church either asserted or implied. Thus the most important functions ascribed to the Son of God appear to be :—Creator of the worlds; Revealer of the Father; Saviour of men; Judge of the human race; and King of that spiritual kingdom which he has succeeded in saving from sin and death.

§.94. In the last long conversation, reported by John, which Jesus held with his disciples just before his betrayal, he said, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may

abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.....the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv. 16, 17, 26.) And again shortly afterwards "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.. I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." (John xvi. 7-13.) In these passages we appear to have references to a spiritual Being related to the Father and the Son, not as a creature, but as one of themselves. His functions appear to be:—to come into the world after the departure of the Son; to reveal additional truth to

the minds of the apostles which they could not then receive ; to comfort the hearts of Christ's people ; and to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Christ, before he left his disciples commissioned them to " Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creatures, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," thus apparently implying that the Divine nature from which men were to draw their spiritual life and nourishment is three-fold. And accordingly the Christian church has from the beginning ascribed divine honours and a divine name equally to Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

§ 95. Thus far I have stated to you simply and in his own recorded language what Christ has revealed regarding the divine nature and functions. Perhaps you wish to have the relations of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to one another and to men and to the universe more fully explained and more clearly defined. I scarcely think that it would be wise to attempt this. The objects and relations of the heavenly kingdom are not directly known to us, and indeed are of such a nature that they cannot become directly known to us. And if we attempt to explain or define them, that is, to express them in such terms that we can thoroughly understand them, it is more than likely that we shall simply lead ourselves into difficulties.

And there is no reason to suppose that *even the revelation* which Christ professed to have made is an absolutely accurate or complete manifestation of the invisible.\* We must remember that his revelation was necessarily brought down to the level of our comprehension; human relations, especially that of father to son were made use of to illustrate divine relations. But we are sure that nothing merely human can offer an adequate or complete analogy to the divine; and consequently when we are told that there are a Father, and a Son, and a Holy Spirit who from all eternity have been together, and have exercised special functions in the creation, preservation, and salvation of the material and moral universe, we are to think, not that we know the absolute and complete truth, but that the truth has been presented to us in such a form that we can understand as much of it as is needful for us at present. The wonderful mysteries of the invisible kingdom have been clothed in forms suited as far as possible to our human comprehensions; but still "we see through a glass darkly"\* and we must not delude ourselves with the belief either that we understand them now or ever will understand them thoroughly. However enough has been revealed regarding the wonderful love of the divine Being, and the ways of His working in the universe;



and especially the great work of the Son and Spirit in effecting human salvation, to inspire us with confidence in the Saviour and fill our minds "with wonder, love and praise."

§ 96. Now I come to say something about the revelation which has been made regarding man. And I can scarcely begin with anything more appropriate than a part of Christ's conversation with a certain ruler of the Jews called Nicodemus, which you will find in the third chapter of John's gospel. Jesus said to him "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, (or from above,) he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . . Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The idea which appears to be conveyed in these verses is, —that we have by inheritance from our fathers a fleshly sinful nature, all men are naturally sinful and inclined to do evil; that with this carnal sinful nature only we cannot see the kingdom of God or enter into it; that in order to inherit this divine kingdom there must spring up within us a new life, not from the flesh or from nature, but from the in-working of the divine Spirit in our hearts; and that only those who have this life kindled from above by the agency of the Holy Spirit can enter into that heavenly kingdom.

where life will be eternal. And this idea of the natural sinfulness of man in consequence of his inheriting a carnal evil nature from the first man, and of the necessity of having a new spiritual life excited within him, is consistently and continuously held forth throughout the whole of the Christian writings. Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. . . . . But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 1, 2, 9-11). Here and in numerous other places we are taught:—that Christ in our carnal human nature and as our representative died to sin; that we, being united by faith to him die also to sin,—our sinful nature must be conquered and killed; that the divine life of Christ springs up within us by the operation of his Spirit and by faith in us; and that Christ by thus giving us his life, a new

spiritual life the same as his, saves us from eternal death and confers upon us a blessed immortality. Let me ask you to read and seriously reflect about these things.

§ 97. Further, we are taught, that those who through faith and the in-working of the Spirit, become partakers of the divine spiritual life of Christ will rise again after the death of the material body to a higher life; and that in that higher life they will be furnished with a spirit-body or a suitable body for the in-dwelling of that spirit of which they have become possessed. As regards the nature of this spirit-body little can be said. In my letter to you upon "The Risen Saviour" I have referred you to Paul's description of it in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, and I can do no more now than refer you to his description again and ask you to read and reflect for yourselves. Recently two distinguished scientific men in Scotland, in a work called "The Unseen Universe," have attempted to show that Paul's account of the resurrection body and the general Christian doctrine of immortality are quite consistent with science, and are indeed to a certain extent rendered probable by immediate conclusions from known scientific facts. Still we must regard the Christian doctrine of the resurrection and immortal life as being based solely upon revelation;

we have no other grounds for believing in them than the fact that Christ and his apostles revealed them; although, having been revealed, we may observe many things in nature somewhat analogous to them, and by observing these things our confidence in the revelation may be confirmed. Let me now point out the importance practically of this doctrine of the resurrection and immortality. In it there is given to the Christian a suitable and very powerful motive for cultivating the higher Christian life. As Paul says, "If ye then be risen with Christ (in spiritual life) seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear then shall ye also appear with him in glory". (Col. iii. 1-4).

§ 98. This leads me to point out the last feature of the Christian revelation regarding man to which I think it important to draw your attention. In the last solemn prayer which Christ prayed to his Father in the presence of his disciples he prays on behalf of all believers in him, thus:—"That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be

one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (John xvii. 21-23). In that future life to which Christ has taught his believing followers to look forward they are to expect a perfection and a glory which they cannot now even conceive. To be one with the Father and the Son is the expression which Christ uses to bring the future state of glory to the level of our minds. But "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for those that love Him."\* Throughout the Christian Scriptures the most various and wonderful imagery is used to make clear to our minds the glory and excellence of the future state of believers. In the Father's house there are many mansions. The heavenly kingdom is like a great city adorned with gold and pearl and precious stones and so filled with divine light that no material sun is required. In that kingdom there is no sin, or imperfection, or sorrow; God himself wipes away all tears from the eyes; every one is pure and bright and holy, even as the Father.† Surely prospects such as these should stimulate effort and lead the

\* 1. Cor. ii. 9.      † Rev. xxi.

Christian to strive to conquer within him everything that is sinful and opposed to the perfect will of God.

§ 99. But now I fancy some of you are asking yourselves,—what about those who have rejected Christ and those who have never heard about him? These are hard and dark questions which I hesitate to answer. You know what Christ has said about those who have rejected him; read the description of the Son of Man upon the throne of judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew from the thirty-first verse to the end, and mark the last verse, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” As to the “everlasting punishment” I do not wish to enlarge upon it, as it is a painful subject; but let me ask you only to consider what the *mere loss* of the glory, and the perfection of the heavenly kingdom would be; surely this itself should be a powerful motive to seek after it. With reference to those who have never heard of Christ I must again ask to be excused, from answering your question. But one thing I believe, and I trust you believe also, that the Judge of all the earth will do right; and He himself has told us that the servant who knew his lord’s will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes, whereas he who knew not his lord’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with few.

stripes.\* All questions connected with the existence of evil, and the perpetuation of evil, and the final end and punishment of evil are dark and mysterious questions. It is better for us to leave them in the hands of Him who, we believe, doeth all things well, and seek earnestly for ourselves and others to secure an entrance into that heavenly kingdom where divine perfection and immortal life are to be obtained.

Luke xii. 47, 48.



## LETTER XVII.

### CHRIST AND OTHER MASTERS.

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§ 100. In this letter I wish to say something about the relations between Christ and other masters. If you have carefully read my previous letters you will understand the position which a Christian must give to Christ, and therefore you might almost anticipate what I have to say about this subject. But I am aware that there are misapprehensions prevalent regarding the relative positions of Christ and other great religious teachers, some of which I desire to clear away. During the history of the world a great many religious teachers have sprung up in different countries and have done a great deal to excite pious feelings and inculcate moral principles amongst men. Many centuries before the birth of Christ, Abraham, a great Chaldæan chieftain, in consequence of a "call" from God left his country and established himself in Palestine, and amongst his descendants many religious and moral teachers arose. Probably about the same time, Zartusht, who is called in Greek Zoroaster, arose in Persia and gave to the worshippers of that country, spiritual ideas which no



doubt had a great effect in elevating and spiritualizing the minds of their descendants. Several centuries after this the Vedic rishis composed their hymns in honour of the powers of nature, evidently having an eye to spiritual powers unseen, and some of their poetic speculations are beautiful and even sublime. Then about five hundred years before the birth of Christ we have the great prophets of the Jewish captivity, and contemporary with them the great Indian prince Gautama, who assumed the character of Buddha or the Wise and established a priesthood and creed which for centuries successfully contended against the exclusiveness and arrogance of the Brahmans in India. About this time also, the great philosophers of India and of Greece taught their systems of thought to their disciples. China also had her Kong-fu-tse or Confucius who gave to the Chinese a system of speculative and ethical doctrine which has exercised a wonderful influence upon the Chinese mind. Since the time of Christ also many great teachers have arisen. The great prophet of Arabia, Mahomet, carried on his warlike mission, and with sword in hand overthrew idolatry and established the worship of Allah and the religion of sensual hope over a large part of Europe, Africa and Asia. The great poets of the Mahabharata and Ramayana chanted their beautiful poems throughout India, and gave

a tone to the religious thought of all modern Hindu races and sects, and to this day the names of Ráma and Sita are associated with everything brave and good and faithful. In Europe also great poets have arisen who have created ideas sublime and beautiful that have done much to mould the intellectual as well as the moral and religious life of the people.

§ 101. Now my first point refers to the position which a believer in Christ should assume with reference to these great religious teachers of different countries and different times. And I may say generally that a Christian believer is at perfect liberty consistently with his creed to recognise and admire anything that is good and true and beautiful wherever it is to be found. If he finds a true or noble religious or moral principle in the hymns of the Zand Avasta or the Vedas, it ought to excite his sympathy and admiration, and he should rejoice that such principles have for so long furnished guidance to the Persian and Indian mind. A good moral precept in the code of Manu should call forth his approval just as readily as if it were found in the laws of Moses. He should be prepared to receive whatever is found to be true in the Hindu philosophical systems as well as in those of Plato and Aristotle and Zeno. The influence of the poetical accounts of the heroes of the Mahabhárata and Ramáyana has no doubt been just.

as good as those of the heroes of the Iliad and Odyssey ; and the moral precepts of the sages of India may stand comparison with those of Greece and Rome. The Christian may admire all in so far as they are worthy of admiration, and see in all an evidence that the Almighty Father has not left His universe to take care of itself.

§ 102. Again it is to be borne in mind that in every religious system the *human element* forms an important part ; and I do not exclude Christianity from this statement. The religious systems of the world consist largely of *human thoughts and feelings* concerning or connected with the unseen spiritual world. Men as they look out into the material universe are struck with wonder by the grandeur or the beauty of the great objects which come within the sphere of their observation—the starry heavens above, the variegated surface of the earth, the winds and the clouds, the lightning and the thunder. And in these they are able to perceive the presence and the working of spiritual powers, themselves unseen. And in addition to this external glory, which to the thinking mind has in all times manifested an unseen spiritual power, men are able to perceive in the moral relations of humanity objects which very readily connect themselves with the unseen objects of faith. Human society has never been composed of separate indivi-

duals ; it has been composed of *families* consisting of parents and children united together by most intimate ties ; the family and not the individual is the unit of the social system. In consequence of this there arise family rights and duties, internal and external ; and what is at first confined to the family soon extends itself to the society or the tribe. Hence arise family and social customs, privileges and duties ; in other words in the family and social relations of man we have the foundations of *morality*. In every country there has sprung up, apparently by what we might call a natural growth, a system of moral precepts and customs which serve to guide the lives of the people. And amongst all the great religions of the world, this domestic and social morality has connected itself in the minds of the people with religion ; the unseen spiritual objects of faith dispense the rewards and the punishments which are attached to the obedience or disobedience of the moral laws. Every system of religion has connected with it these natural religious beliefs and moral precepts. In different countries they assume different forms, as in different countries the circumstances which guided their formation have been different. They may be looked upon as a natural growth, or a development of principles which have been established deep in our common nature by the great Author of our being.

This great outgrowth of natural religion and morality might indeed be looked upon as being of divine origin, inasmuch as it arises from a constitution of human nature established by the Divine Being. But if it be divine, it is manifestly so modified and diversified by human imagination and passion and various local circumstances, that it is difficult to find in it much that is universally thought to be true and good.

§ 103. Now in connection with Christianity there is undoubtedly much of this natural religion and morality which we have seen has been of human growth or development. Christ *adopted* many moral principles and precepts which had previously been recognised both amongst the Jews and surrounding nations ; and he acknowledged religious beliefs which in one form or another were world-wide in extension. He founded his moral instructions and religious teaching upon what had existed widely in the world long before his time. There are thus many religious ideas and moral principles connected with Christianity and now constituting a part of Christian instruction which really existed long before the rise of Christianity and are now found far beyond the field of the Christian preacher. And in the present day there are many religious thinkers who would take this *common property* of all religious systems, and, selecting from it what appears to be truest and best, would thus con-

*struct* a system of religion and morality for themselves. This mode of comparing the common elements of all religions is adopted by those who call themselves Eclectics, and is the method of a modern scientific school of thinkers who thus attempt to construct what might be called Comparative Religion, a possible science analogous to Comparative Mythology or Comparative Grammar. Now Christians can have no reasonable objection to this system of comparing what is common to Christianity and other systems of religious belief; probably the Christian code of morals will not suffer by the comparison. And it may be admitted that the Comparative Method is a fair and scientifically correct way of studying the religions of the world *considering them as only of natural human growth or development.*

§ 104. But every Christian sees something in Christianity which he cannot see in any of the other religions of the world; and this peculiarity constitutes that which is essential to the Christian faith. This essential point and peculiarity of the Christian faith is two-fold: it consists first of a *historical fact* testified to by reliable witnesses,—that “CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, AND WAS BURIED, AND ROSE AGAIN ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES;” it consists in the second place of a *divine act* testified to by Christ himself,—“GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT.

HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN AND WELL-BELOVED SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." Now you can see for yourselves at a moment's glance that a Christian who believes this human-historical and divine-revealed peculiarity of Christianity *cannot* make it the subject of comparison with anything found in any other religion whatever ; for the simple reason that he can see nothing in any other religious system which is at all like it. Around this two-fold, human-and-divine centre everything connected with the Christian faith revolves ; if you remove this centre or ignore it, you may then treat the Christian religion, and every other, as a product of human growth, and examine it by the comparative method or any other method sanctioned by human science. But as long as it is held, according to the Christian Revelation, that God sent His eternal Son to partake of our human nature and rescue it from sin and death ; and as long as it is believed that Jesus the incarnate Son voluntarily gave up his life for human sin and arose in our human nature to a higher life with God ; as long as these things are held, it is *impossible* for Christians to see anything in any other religious faith which can be compared with them. And you should not think that Christians are bigoted or exclusive when they refuse to place their faith upon the same level with that of


the other great faiths of the world. Their refusal to do so arises, necessarily from the nature of the two-fold peculiarity to which I have just now turned your attention ; if they really believe in the gift by God of his own Son to save men, and in the completion of the work of salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus they cannot do otherwise than refuse to place any other person upon a level with Him whom they regard as the only Saviour of man. I make these remarks because I fear that many of you think that it is out of religious bigotry or national jealousy that Christians refuse to place other great religious teachers on a level with Christ. It is nothing of the kind ; their refusal is an absolute necessity arising out of the nature of the case ; they would not be true Christians unless they did refuse.

§ 105. However if we consider the other great religions of the world as being great human efforts to search after a knowledge of the unseen world and to guide human life according to what is good, there is very much in them which Christians may admire and study with pleasure. One of the things which have been more prominently brought out amongst Christians than elsewhere is, the universal brotherhood of man ; and therefore Christians should feel an interest in anything *human* wherever it is presented. Nay more, it is an essential part of the Christian faith,



that the Eternal Son, the manifester of God, by whom and for whom all things have been created is "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And it appears therefore to be necessary for Christians to believe that every gleam of true light which has visited the human mind from the beginning has been struck forth from the great centre of light. And if, amongst the grotesque and fantastic imaginations of human mythology, and the more sober speculations of human philosophy, we find glimpses of truth and goodness, or earnest and sincere searchings after higher light and higher life, we are warranted in considering these things as being like the dawn which foreshadows a brighter day. . And in them we have an evidence that the all-wise and all-good Father has, from the beginning and over the wide world, been leading men by a way that they knew not to a more glorious destiny than they have been able to conceive. But you must also bear in mind that Christians regard all this preliminary guidance as being a leading of men towards Christ,—a preparing of them for the reception of his Gospel. This it was, we believe, amongst the ancient Jews in a special manner; but over the whole world also in some way or other. And now in this time of Missionary enterprise and world-wide preaching of the gospel, it would appear as if the period of preparation and preliminary guidance

were drawing towards its close, and the fulness of the times were being ushered in when the commission of Christ to preach His gospel to all nations may be literally carried out. Christians do not go about the world in their own name, preaching their own wisdom or their own philosophy ; they point, like the first apostles, to the crucified and the risen Jesus, and they absolutely and universally refuse to recognise any other Saviour. They cannot help this. Believing as they do that they draw their spiritual life from Him, and that through Him only eternal life with the Father is to be obtained, they feel themselves bound by love and loyalty, both to their Master and their fellow-men to proclaim Him as " the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Hence while in a human and-subordinate sense, we may respect and honour many masters who have appeared in the world and done honour to our nature, there is a special sense in which the Christian can call no man Master except Christ, because He is the only Saviour from sin and death.





## LETTER XVIII.

### A POSTSCRIPT.

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§ 106. We have now, my friends, accompanied one another over very wide and very important fields of thought. We have studied together the deep-lying principles in our nature which compel us to look beyond the things that we see with our physical eyes in search of some adequate cause of things known—principles which make us not only rational, but religious, beings. We have examined different conceptions which may be formed of the unknown cause of things existing, and have concluded that, according to the constitution of our nature, we think most truly and most worthily of that unknown cause when we conceive it to be an all-powerful, all-wise and all-good Being, possessed of the highest and the best attributes of which we are conscious in our own humanity, but without anything of our imperfection and sinfulness. We have concluded that by the use of the natural powers with which we are endowed we cannot, with certainty, penetrate beyond the veil of sense which forms the external surface of this wonderful universe; the intuitions of the poet and the sage may be clothed in

very beautiful or very sublime language, but if they are nothing more than human efforts after a knowledge of the unseen, they cannot command that confidence which people should seek after in the important practical concerns of life and death and a possible eternity. We have studied the only genuine and trustworthy source of religious knowledge—revelation, and have determined the characteristics which should make any alleged revelation worthy of serious examination by all mankind. If any professed revelation is of merely local and special interest; if it merely gratifies vain curiosity without being of any practical good; if it offers no satisfactory marks by which a reasonable mind may determine whether it is a genuine revelation or not; in these circumstances we would not consider it worthy of our attention, and the time spent in examining it, would be better occupied in some other way. But if on the other hand, as I attempted to show you was really the case in the Christian revelation, it professes to be of universal interest to man; if it claims to be of supreme practical importance throughout the whole of man's existence both in time and eternity; and if it comes characterized by many marks and having many signs pointing to a divine origin, some of which at least may be studied and understood by the ordinary human mind; in these circumstances we have the

strongest motives to lead us onward, to its thorough examination. I think it has not been made out that any other alleged revelation except the Christian can present these claims to careful investigation. I am quite willing to admit that some other forms of religious faith can count a much larger number of adherents than the Christian; but I do not admit that the reasonableness or the truth of a system of religious belief can be ascertained by counting the number who hold it. When Galileo asserted that the earth revolved around the sun, everybody else in the world would have contradicted him; nevertheless he was right.

§ 107. In studying the different elements of the Christian revelation, we pointed out a wonderful unity and harmony existing between all its parts from the first "call" given to the patriarch Abraham to the last words of Christian truth and love recorded by the apostle John. Human salvation is the great burden of this revelation taken as a whole; all the nations of the earth are to be blessed, people from every nation and kingdom and tongue are to find an entrance into the kingdom of God. Faint and indistinct, no doubt, were the gleams of gospel light which shone in early pre-Christian times. The Jewish patriarchs and judges and kings were too much taken up with the present and the still-remembered past to think much

of the future ; but occasionally " a dim religious light " illuminated the coming time, and the " covenant " made with the fathers became filled with new and glorious meaning, and prophets divinely-inspired pointed the people to a future time when a wonderful anointed messenger from Jehovah should come to the world and establish a kingdom which should never pass away. In the fulness of the times, when the Jewish nation expected their Messiah, and other nations were looking for the arrival of some wonderful personage, when the great empires of Asia had lost their vitality and the imperial power had passed over into Europe, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The life which he lived, the works which he wrought, the lessons which he taught, the death which he died, and the higher life which, in our human nature, he achieved, have been the subjects of description and comment in these letters that I have addressed to you. But in looking over what I have already said, I cannot but feel that I have failed to do justice to the grand topic. No human life was ever like His life ; no words of mine can present to you in all their fulness and in true proportions, the features and the elements of the character and the life of Jesus. Friends and enemies for more than eighteen centuries have turned their attention most carefully and critically to every recorded point connected with his

wonderful career, and although there has been evinced the widest disagreement between their opinions, the mere fact of such wide-spread, continued, and earnest study of the life of Jesus testifies to its importance. The words and the deeds and the career of no other human being have ever given rise to such world-wide and continuous and anxious criticism. And why is this? Manifestly because no other human being ever made such claims, founded upon such reasons, and connected with blessings of such supreme and universal importance as He.

§ 108. In connection with this subject I need scarcely point out to you that all that we can *directly* study and understand is the *human* life of Jesus. And what a wonderful human life it was! So full of love, of sympathy for human sorrow and suffering, of self-denial voluntarily undergone for the benefit of others, of complete devotion and resignation to the will of the Father! So full, at the same time, of stern and strong integrity and honesty of purpose, of clear and penetrating insight into the character of others, of indignant condemnation of hypocrisy and cruelty, and of that moral power over the minds of others which is an essential characteristic of a great man! But from the midst of this human life we observe bursting forth in irrepressible glory indications of something more than human. The scene upon the



mountain of transfiguration presented to three of his disciples (Math. xvii. 1-9) is typical of the character of his whole life. The human nature of Jesus appears to the student of his life to be, as it were, a thin veil through which the glories of the divine nature are permitted to shine forth to man. And Jesus himself tells us that this was the case, and that He left the glory which He had with the Father in order to communicate to man the knowledge and the living influence needful to bring man into reconciliation and living union with the Father. And after he laid down His human life in obedience to the will of His Father, after He suffered upon the cross all that sin and death and the prince of evil could work upon our human nature, he conquered these, the great enemies of man, and, as the evidence of his conquest, rose from the grave to a new and still human life in a glorified spirit-body. He was a representative man : He died not for Himself, nor did he rise from the grave for Himself ; but He died and rose again as the representative and the first-fruits of the *human race*. "The new and glorious life which He achieved in our human nature, He declared Himself able and willing to communicate to others. He proclaimed it to be the great object of His mission to give new spiritual life to man — a life which should be begun in this world, which should penetrate and purify and elevate the natural

life of those who receive it, and which should continue more perfect and more glorious throughout a future eternity. He established a system in the world—a church whose prime object it should be to make known this gospel of salvation, and to extend and establish that kingdom of which Christ is the Head, and all those who receive the new and higher life from Him are the members. And now all over the world His message to man is being carried, and those who feel that they are sinful and imperfect and mortal are earnestly invited to come unto Him and be reconciled to the Father and obtain life spiritual and eternal.

§ 109. But have we any independent evidence that the allegations which Christ made about Himself and His work are true? Can we verify them? We have not; we can not. No human being but Christ or one inspired by Christ *could* testify, from independent knowledge, to His divine origin or to the character and purpose of His work. The apostles testified abundantly to His nature and the nature of his work; but their testimony is not independent,—they professed to derive and really did derive all their knowledge about Him from Himself. If therefore we place confidence in Christ's allegations, in His claims regarding Himself, it must be, not because we have satisfied our minds concerning their truth by indepen-

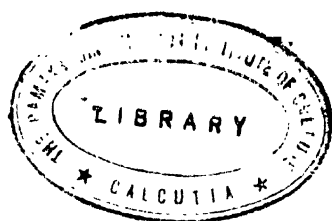
dent investigation, for that is impossible, but because we place confidence in Christ. The Christian religion is based upon *faith*, not upon *independent knowledge*. At the same time the faith is a reasonable faith ; it is a faith which people are called upon to exercise after the examination of many marks and many circumstances quite sufficient to guide and determine human belief. The unity and harmony of the whole Christian revelation, the Messianic expectations of the Jewish people, the precise predictions of Daniel and their fulfilment, the unique character of the life of Jesus, his super-human works, his noble moral instructions, his sinlessness, his voluntary submission to death and his victory over death, the great success of his church, the influence which his faith exerted upon the hearts and lives of those who received it, the effects which the Christian religion has produced in the world,—all these and other circumstances which might be pointed out are marks, which we can study, sufficiently numerous and clear to form a *reasonable* ground for the faith of Christians to rest upon. These things, my friends, I have endeavoured to bring before your minds in all earnestness and in all kindness. What the results may be, I do not know, and probably neyer will know. But let me ask you to think about these things with calmness and seriousness ; they are undoubtedly the most important things about which

the human mind can be exercised and should therefore be studied without prejudice and with an earnest desire to discover and accept what is true.

§ 110. And now in concluding this series of letters to the younger generation of the natives of India, I wish to express the pleasure that I have felt in preparing them, and the gratitude which I now feel in having been permitted to address so many of the educated natives of this country upon such important subjects. Whether you accept my conclusions or not, I shall feel that good has been done if your minds have been stirred up to serious sober reflection regarding the things of <sup>the</sup> higher life. But I cannot refrain from expressing a hope that many may be led to receive the Christian revelation as a revelation of truth and especially Christ himself as a personal Saviour. Believing as I do that He is not merely the Messiah of the Jews but also the Saviour of man, that His faith is not merely the light and the life of Europe where it first found its home, but also of India and the whole world to which it is now offered, I cannot think that the object of this or any other missionary effort can be accomplished unless it contributes to the establishment of the Christian faith in your hearts and lives. I believe that in this faith there are found the elements and the motive powers necessary for the regeneration of India and, indeed, of the whole

world. And believing this, I pray that God in His own good time and manner may lead your minds to see and profess the truth revealed in Jesus and may prepare your hearts to receive that spiritual and eternal life which the eternal Son came into the world for the purpose of giving to man.

FAREWELL.











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